

# A TASTE OF MINDFULNESS



Research shows that we make more than 200 food decisions each day and are unaware of ~90% of them. Many factors can interfere with your ability to accurately listen to your body's hunger cues. Mindful eating is one way you can step away from your routine eating habits, pay attention to WHY and HOW you are eating, and begin to make informed eating decisions. Consider the steps below to increase your eating awareness and execution skills.

# 1

## Shift out of autopilot. Before you eat, ask yourself why are you eating?

- Hungry? – see hunger scale.
- Bored/restless/eating for entertainment?
- Others are eating or to be social?
- Proximity? – food just happens to be there.
- Managing emotion (anxiety, stress, excitement, grief, etc...)?
- Conditioned eating? – used to eating a lot and often to support high volume training or learned to clean your plate as a child.
- Food cravings?

# 2

## Tune into your hunger and fullness cues.

- When you pay attention to your hunger and fullness cues and eat until satisfied, over time your body will give clear signals. Meal planning and regular meals will help you find a rhythm allowing you to manage your hunger. If you find yourself waiting too long to eat you may become too hungry and overeat. On the other hand, if you are constantly grazing you may under eat or be less satisfied and eat more than needed over a day. Both situations can lead to a cyclical pattern of under or overeating.
- Check out the hunger scale below and aim to eat in the green zone. If you find that you are unable to eat only when in the green zones, be patient with yourself as it has taken years for you to develop your current patterns of eating.

Hunger and Fullness Scale		
5	Starving	Rip the fridge door off hungry – may feel nauseated, fatigued, shaky, lightheaded.
4	Very Hungry	Thinking about food non-stop – everything looks tasty. Feel lightheaded, irritable, hangry.
2-3	Hungry	Thinking about food. Stomach is growling and you have hunger pangs – time to eat a meal.
1	A Little Hungry	Just starting to think about food – time to eat a snack.
0	Fully Satisfied	Have eaten the right amount. Neither hungry nor full. No longer thinking about food. If looking for food, ask yourself why?
-1	Full	Don't need/want food anything else to eat. No longer thinking about food.
-2	Very Full	Ate a few bites too many.
-3	Extremely Full	Did not need the second helping.
-4	Stuffed	Uncomfortable, bloated.
-5	Painfully Full	Feel sick.



### **Eat with awareness and savor your food.**

# 3

- Strengthen your relationship with food by preparing meals or trying a new recipe.
- We eat with all of our senses so try to make your food look as good as possible by adding colour and textural variety.
- Celebrate food – use nice dishes rather than eating out of packages.
- Sit down while eating.
- Slow down and savour the flavour of each bite. Pause by putting cutlery down between bites and chew your food thoroughly.
- When you are eating, eat. Try not to multitask. Turn off technology unless it is to share a virtual meal with a friend.
- Resign from the clean plate club – push away from the table when you are aware that you are satisfied, even if there is food on your plate. Choosing a smaller plate may help. You can always have more if you are still hungry.

### **Pay attention to “messy moments”.**

# 4

- It’s easy to think about your eating when you are on-track or “eating clean”. However, the times when you find yourself eating mindlessly or when not hungry are the most informative. Be curious. Journal what you were thinking and feeling before, during, and after messy moment eating.
- Pay attention to what happens and to your feelings around eating transitions (end of meal/empty plate). Is there a sense of anxiety, tension, loss, or grief? Do you rush into dessert or distract yourself completely with social media?
- Notice when rigid rules or guilt pop into your mind. If self-critical thoughts creep into your mind, remember, a thought is not a fact.

***Paying attention and gaining awareness is how you can begin to understand the WHY’S of non-hunger eating and start to set small goals for more mindful eating and a healthy relationship with food.***

### **Strategies and support to manage reasons underlying non-hunger eating.**

# 5

- Set up an action plan – make a list of things to do instead of eating. Try three things on the list to get you out of the kitchen before you decide if you are really hungry. If you are hungry or still really want to eat – sit down to a pre-planned snack and try to eat with awareness.
- Connect with trusted friends and family.
- Seek help from trained professionals. Talk to your Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute network provider, your Canadian Sport Centre provider, or local professionals you have engaged with at your university or home program. If you do not have a professional you can contact, reach out to your Performance Link coach who can help direct you to the appropriate support personnel.