

The Worst Things to Do When You Eat

1, Mindless snacking

Solution: Pay attention to what you grab on the go. Have something protein- or fiber-rich. Choose fresh fruit, fresh vegetables or leftovers (roast chicken, a piece of cooked fish) instead of fried, processed or calorie- and sugar-dense foods.

2, Drinking your calories

Solution: If you're thirsty, watch what you drink. Too many people guzzle sodas, juices, alcoholic drinks and ice cream concoctions without thinking about how many calories (not to mention sugar and fat) they might be taking in as well. Choose water with lemon or lime, a glass of soda water with a shot of fresh juice, or a low-cal beverage like enhanced waters or sports drinks (but go carefully with these, too).

3, Ignoring labels

Solution: Read the label carefully to determine what a portion REALLY is and if you can afford the calories, fat, sodium or sugar in the serving. If you can't, adjust the portion size or choose something more nutritious or less dangerous to your diet.

4, Supersizing your food

Solution: Be sure that the portion of almost everything you eat should never be bigger than your fist. That means that the big bowl of pasta, the dinner-plate size enchilada, the humungous burger are way more than one serving. You should be able to see some of your plate after you are served.

5, Making every day a special occasion

Solution: Indulge on special days and for special events, yes. But every day isn't your birthday. Decide to reserve your food indulgences for the times when you REALLY want to celebrate.

6, Eating right out of the bag, the box, the gallon...

Solution: It's far too easy to eat more than you had planned if you don't portion your food. If you're having a meal or a snack, serve yourself the right amount and put away the rest. Don't tempt yourself to overeat by eating straight out of that big bag of chips or the gallon of ice cream. Even better, buy only the indulgent foods in single-serving sizes so you can't eat more than you should.

7, Lying to yourself

Solution: It's easy to low ball the amount of food we eat. If you have a habit of this, keep a food journal and write down EVERYTHING you eat and drink for at least a week (even better, two). Check the journal every day for accuracy to see if you're leaving anything out or purposely omitting things (yes, the handful of nuts and that latte on the way to the doctor's office do count).

8, Eating out

Solution: Unless you're vigilant about checking, you rarely know what you're eating if you dine out. Either look up restaurant menus and check the ingredients and nutritional info before you go or ask your server about them when you're at the restaurant. Ask how food is prepared (deep fried vs. pan sautéed; cooked with butter or with olive oil). Practice portion control; most servings are big enough for two or three meals. As soon as you're served, ask for a box to take away half of your meal so you won't be tempted to overeat. Keep track of the places that accommodate your requests for healthier plates and the foods that provide more nutritional bang for your buck.

9, Eating out of guilt

Solution: When friends, family or co-workers try to make you eat (it's someone's birthday and of course you should have a drink or two, they made the cake just for you, this is your grandmother's special cheese blintz recipe), don't beat around the bush: just say no. You can be polite and say you're not hungry or have already eaten or that you are not eating/drinking that particular thing at the moment. If people push, stay strong. After all, if you were diabetic, would they force the chocolate truffles down your throat? They should respect your decision and support it.

10, Just tasting

Solution: If you clean your child's plate or sample the soup/pasta sauce/cookie dough while cooking, you need to monitor this eating. Sharing a meal is one thing, but eating your own food and part of someone else's is overeating. This is true if you're eating while cooking the meal and then sitting down to eat with the rest of the family (or alone). Don't double dip.