



## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means paying full attention to the present moment—what you're doing, feeling, or thinking—without judging it. It's like turning off autopilot and really noticing what's happening right now.

## What is Mindful eating?

Mindful Eating is using that same idea when you eat. Instead of eating while distracted (like watching TV or scrolling your phone), you:

- Pay attention to the taste, smell, and texture of your food
- Eat slowly and notice how hungry or full you feel
- Appreciate the meal and how it makes you feel

**Mindfulness = being present and not distracted**

**Mindful eating = being present with your food**

## Steps to Mindfully Eat:

### 1. Pause Before You Eat

Take a breath. Notice the food in front of you. How does it look? Smell? Some other prompts (only use what works for you):

- a. What does it *feel* like in your mouth?
- b. What *flavours* can you find?
- c. When do you start to feel full?

### 2. Remove Distractions:

Turn off the TV, put your phone away. Focus only on your food and the moment.

### 3. Take Small Bites

Start with a small bite. Let it sit in your mouth for a second before chewing.

### 4. Chew Slowly & Fully

Notice the texture and flavours. What do you taste? Sweet? Salty? Crunchy?



### 5. Check In with Your Body

Are you still hungry? Feeling full? Satisfied? Notice how your body feels as you eat.

### 6. Appreciate the Meal

Think about where the food came from, who prepared it, how many people it took to get this meal to you or just feel grateful for it.

### 7. Eat Until You're Satisfied, Not Stuffed

Try to notice when you feel comfortably full and know it is ok to stop then, it doesn't matter if you have or haven't eaten everything on the plate.

## Benefits of Mindful Eating:

- **Improves digestion** – Eating slowly helps your stomach do its job better. (1)
- **Can help enjoyment of food:** You start to *really* taste your food — the textures, flavours, even the way it makes you feel. Eating becomes more fun and satisfying.
- **More Steady Energy-** When you eat mindfully, your body gets a chance to break down food more smoothly. That means you're less likely to feel super tired or "crash" after eating — just steady energy to help you stay focused and feel good throughout the day (2).
- **May result in healthier food choices**
- **May reduce stress**
- **May help with emotional eating (3)**

## What is the link between our brain and our gut?

Our gut is home to trillions of microorganisms, often referred to as the "gut microbiome" or more casually as "gut bugs"—also known as probiotics.

We have both "good" and "bad" gut bugs, but ideally, we want more of the good ones (4). An imbalance in gut bacteria (more bad than good) has been shown to affect human health, including mental health (5)

We know that mental health is influenced by many factors, such as sleep, stress, trauma, and more. A range of supports are often needed, like exercise, therapy/ CBT, medication, improving sleep and stress, or even changing environments (6). But an important piece we



sometimes overlook is food. Nutrition can also play a role in supporting mental well-being (7).

To foster a gut environment rich in good bacteria, we need to feed the good bugs—and their favourite food is fibre. We can only get fibre from whole plant foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and whole grains (like rice) (8).

Things that can upset the balance of gut bacteria include chronic stress, poor or insufficient sleep, alcohol, and diets low in those plant foods mentioned above (9).

The challenge is, when we're not feeling great emotionally or mentally, fruits and vegetables are often the last things we feel like eating. But remember every little bit counts. Adding a banana to your cereal, a few slices of tomato to your toast, some lettuce to a sandwich or burger, or tossing in frozen veggies as a side dish, all these small steps add up. Over time, they can genuinely help support your mood and overall mental health.

#### References:

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