

How to... eat more slowly

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People who wolf down their food are more likely to be overweight and suffer from digestive problems.

Here are tips from local nutritionists on setting a healthier pace:

Stop eating before you feel full. It takes 15 to 20 minutes for your digestive system to tell your brain that you've had enough. If you keep eating until that feeling registers, you pack in lots of extra calories. Instead, put down your fork when you start to feel satisfied.

Turn utensils into allies. Make a habit of putting down your fork or spoon after each bite; don't pick it up again until you've swallowed. If you're eating hand-held foods, place them on your plate between bites. Note: To really slow yourself down, try eating with chopsticks.

Chew well. Take small bites of food and chew each one about four or five times before swallowing. Don't take the next bite until your mouth is empty. You also can take a sip of water between mouthfuls.

Take breaks. Once or twice during a meal, stop eating for about a minute. Talk, drink some water and take note of how full you're getting.

Relax. Try to schedule mealtimes when you can sit down and not rush. If you can, play soft background music _ studies have shown it makes people slow down.

Concentrate on your meal. Distractions such as TV can keep you from

noticing how quickly you're eating. Take the time to enjoy the flavors, smells and textures of foods.

Try different dishes. If you have the same meals all the time, you're more likely to eat quickly and mindlessly.

Time yourself. As you adjust to a slower pace, a watch or timer can help you set goals.

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