

Effect of taking smaller bites outweighs tendency to eat more when distracted

January 23 2013

Eating while distracted generally makes people eat more without being aware of it, but reducing bite sizes may be able to counter this effect, according to new research published January 23 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Dieuwerke Bolhuis and colleagues from Wageningen University, Netherlands.

Previous studies have shown that taking smaller bites helps people eat less. Other research has also shown that people tend to eat larger meals if eating while distracted.

In this new study, the authors assessed whether taking smaller bites or sips of food affected meal size if eaters were distracted during their meal. Participants in the study were given a meal of soup as they watched a 15 minute [animation film](#). Two groups ate in pre-measured volumes of either 'small' or 'large' sips, and the rest were allowed to take sips of whatever size they liked. All participants could eat as much as they wanted, and were later asked to estimate how much they had eaten.

The authors found that people who ate pre-specified 'small' bites of food consumed about 30% less soup for their meal than those in the other two groups. The latter two groups also under-estimated how much they had eaten. Across all three groups, [distractions](#) during the meal led to a general increase in [food intake](#), but even when distracted, people who ate pre-specified small sips of soup consumed less food than the others. According to the researchers, their results suggest that reducing sip or bite sizes during a meal may help those trying to lower their food intake,

even if they are eating while distracted.

More information: Bolhuis DP, Lakemond CMM, de Wijk RA, Luning PA, de Graaf C (2013) Consumption with Large Sip Sizes Increases Food Intake and Leads to Underestimation of the Amount Consumed. PLoS ONE 8(1): e53288. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0053288](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0053288)

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Citation: Effect of taking smaller bites outweighs tendency to eat more when distracted (2013, January 23) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-01-effect-smaller-outweighs-tendency-distracted.html>

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