

Put the brakes on mindless eating

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(HealthDay)—We've all come up with excuses for eating when we're really not hungry, like dealing with a difficult boss or a bad breakup. But what's worse is pigging out because you've got nothing better to do.

Sure, eating when you're bored can light up the [pleasure center](#) in your brain, giving you a temporary high. But, it can also add some unwanted—even permanent—pounds on the scale.

What's the cure for boredom eating? Rachel Begun, a Los Angeles-area registered dietitian and nutrition consultant, suggests you practice mindful eating instead of [mindless eating](#).

That means knowing your body's cues for real hunger. So before you raid the kitchen for a quick fix, ask yourself, "Am I really hungry?"

Know the true signs of hunger:

- a growling stomach.
- a headache.
- lack of energy.

To stop [food](#) temptations, give your pantry a makeover, and get rid of unhealthy packaged foods. Eating salty, fatty or sugary treats when you're bored can train your brain to want them every time you're bored.

Next, devise a plan B for boredom. Make a list of activities you can do to keep your mind off food and your hands out of the fridge. Take a walk, call a friend or watch a movie. Crossword puzzles and knitting are two activities that can keep your hands busy, too.

Also, make changes to your everyday routine to keep from getting bored. Take a different route on your daily jog or eat outside on a warm evening. After all, variety is the spice of life.

More information: For more tips on how to practice mindful eating, visit [Brigham and Women's Hospital](#) in Boston.

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