

Dinner companions may influence how much you eat

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(HealthDay)—When eating out, helpful tricks like sharing an entree or

ordering an appetizer instead of a main dish can curb calories. But your choice of dining companions may factor into the equation, too.

An experiment done at the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab confirmed the theory that people are less likely to stick to their own diet rules when eating with or near someone overweight. The researchers found that diners at a [buffet](#) ate larger portions of unhealthy foods—and smaller portions of healthy foods—even when the [overweight person](#) ate less.

One possible explanation for this behavior is that people become less in tune with their goals when they see others who are overweight.

Studies have also found that diners can be influenced by being near anyone who's overeating, even when that person is slim. Their overeating can encourage your [overeating](#).

Strategies to remain on track when eating out include staying out of harm's way by avoiding all-you-can-eat restaurants; telling your dining companions about your diet goals so they won't unintentionally tempt you to overeat; and reminding yourself of your goals before you enter any restaurant.

When possible, decide in advance what you're going to order by reading menus on [restaurant](#) websites. This makes it less likely that you'll be influenced by your environment.

For those times when you do find yourself facing a buffet, take a full tour of the table before you make any selections. Other Cornell research found that people load up on the foods placed at the beginning of a buffet and that they take even larger helpings when the dishes are unhealthy. So, be sure to identify the location of the healthiest choices before you reach for a serving spoon and start filling your plate.

More information: Get more tips for [healthy restaurant dining](#) on the Cornell Food and Brand Lab website.

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