

# Slow down! Eating too fast can pile on the pounds

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(HealthDay)—Has your hectic lifestyle turned you into someone who gulps down meals?

People who eat quickly tend to eat more and have a higher body mass index (a measure of body fat based on height and weight) than those who eat slowly. People who eat slowly feel full sooner and eat less in the process.

Part of the reason for this is the time it takes for your brain to get key messages from your digestive system. Conventional wisdom says that's about 20 minutes, and one study found that slowing down to 30 minutes is even more effective. But that means you have to find ways to really stretch out your meals.

Tricks like eating with your non-dominant hand can help a lot, but eating fast can be a hard habit to break. One high-tech solution is a commercially available smart fork, a utensil that registers your eating speed and sends a signal, with a vibration and a flash of light, if you eat too quickly. Participants in an experimental study found that it

was comfortable to hold and did a good job of making them more aware of their eating speed. But you can also try to slow down on your own with a regular fork: Just put it down and count to 10 between *each and every bite*.

Reinforce the slower eating habit with portion cues such as using smaller plates and bowls. Part of feeling full is visual, and an overflowing smaller plate might trick your mind into thinking you're eating more calories than you really are. Large dishes with empty spaces do the opposite, giving the illusion that your diet portions are smaller than they really are.

Always use measuring cups and spoons to dole out correct [portions](#)—you may be surprised at how you've supersized your meals on your own! Also, don't go back for second helpings, and stay focused on your food—no TV or reading while you eat.

**More information:** Harvard Health has more about the theory behind [eating slowly](#) and why it may help control portions.

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