

## This Holiday Season, Eat Mindful, Not Mindless

It's the holidays and for most Americans, that means eating – lots of eating – followed by weight gain and a New Year's resolution to lose weight. But why not take a healthier approach to what we eat during this holiday season and beyond?

According to a recent website survey, about 18 percent of people say it's hard for them to eat healthy because they don't want to stop eating their favorite foods. The good news is you don't have to. You can still enjoy your favorite occasional indulgences, but in moderation. It's all about being mindful of what you eat.

### Mindless Eating

Mindless eating is consuming food just because it's there. It's eating while distracted – watching TV, working at a computer or texting on our smartphones. It's eating for emotional comfort instead of for hunger. Simply put, it's not paying attention to what we eat which can lead to being overweight and even obesity.

### Awareness

When you pay attention to what you're eating, you can make small changes that make a big difference. Here are some tips toward a more mindful approach:

**Control portions.** Especially during the holidays, know that you'll have more opportunities to eat festive snacks and desserts. You don't have to deprive yourself, just eat smaller portions and less often.

**Eat when you're hungry.** Just because the clock says noon doesn't mean you have to eat. If you're not hungry, wait until you are – just don't wait until you're famished because you might overeat. Also, don't eat just because the food is available.

**Plan.** Prepare healthy snacks throughout the day. If you tend to get hungry between meals, bring along a 200-calorie, whole grain, high-fiber snack. Fiber keeps you feeling full longer.

**Slow down.** Enjoy each bite and put your fork down while chewing, then take a drink between each bite. This gives your body enough time to trigger your brain that you are satisfied (not necessarily full).

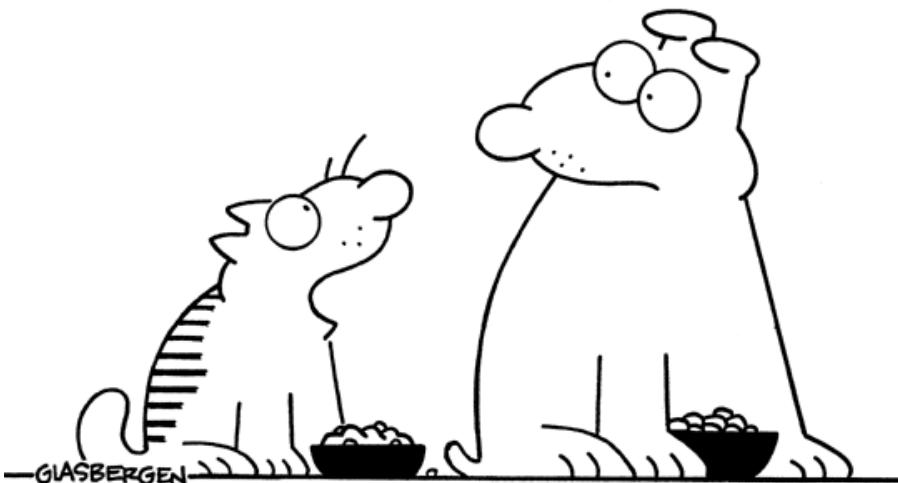
**Pay attention.** Do not eat in front of the TV or computer, or while standing in the kitchen or talking on the phone. When you do these things, you're more likely to lose track of how much you've eaten.

**Use technology.** As we continue to become increasingly distracted by modern technology, our focus on health can fall to the back burner. Use an app to manage food records, count calories, track what you eat and even provide guidance on healthy food choices at the grocery store and restaurants.

**Keep a food diary.** Write down everything you eat, look at it, then identify why you ate it – was it hunger, stress, boredom? Then look for areas you can make adjustments and incorporate healthy changes.

Source: [AHA](#)

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**"The vet says I need a hobby. I thought eating and sleeping were my hobbies!"**