

# Tips For Avoiding Overeating



Every one of us has experienced the feeling that we ate way more than we really should have. It's really pretty clear when this has happened. You have that "overstuffed" feeling. Your stomach feels like it's going to burst. You may even begin belching and you have that bloated feeling where you need to loosen your belt a notch or two or even unbutton your pants

or skirt altogether! This situation is a common occurrence with just about every American on Thanksgiving Day; a time where Americans are granted a license to overindulge. If it's not one of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, then it should certainly should be considered for inclusion as an amendment!

There are of course other holidays, special events, and family gatherings where overindulging is both common and expected. Coming from an Italian-American family, I can certainly remember more than a few five-course meals that left me hurting long after they were over. Some of these "feasts" would have been enough to make Caligula blush!

But what about all the other times that we overeat and don't even realize it?

The reality with a lot of people, at least those where food is always in abundance, is that they quite often eat more than they truly need. This happens without the clear signals from their digestive systems that they've overeaten as mentioned above. When asked if they've had enough to eat, they will usually respond that they have or that they may even feel stuffed, but this is what they've come to expect at most of the meals they eat.

For those looking to take off excess weight from fat deposits,

chronic overeating presents an almost insurmountable obstacle towards their goal. Combined with diets that contain too many processed foods and “bad carbs” along with a severe lack of physical activity, they have placed themselves at a severe disadvantage. As can be seen, putting on extra weight is both a complex and long term process. Subsequently, taking it off is equally complex and time-consuming. For now, let’s have a look at what constitutes overeating, how to recognize it, and strategies for preventing it.

### **Forget about counting meals or calories**

I have some strong opinions about meal frequency, snacking, and calorie and even carb counting, and I will delve into each of these issues much deeper in other posts, but to sum up, dieting is complicated and stressful enough without sabotaging your efforts before even getting started! Personally, I don’t count my meals or calories. Things like total daily calories and carbs consumed get taken care of all by themselves. My total carb consumption is controlled by the food I’ve eliminated from my diet and total calories are controlled by portion sizes.

### **Portion size is your key to avoiding overeating**

Though our bodies are truly amazing creations, much of what was put in place to protect us from the constant threat of starvation during prehistoric times now works against many of us today. Just about anyone who has been on a “starvation” style diet can attest to their body’s extreme stubbornness in holding onto every last ounce of fat. A more subtle mechanism is the delay between feeling full and actually being full. This delay can be measured between the second slice of pepperoni pizza and the last one. Tongue-in-cheek poor humor aside, the amount of food required to keep your metabolism stoked and also satisfy your immediate hunger is much less than what you probably consume at most meals.

## **Rule of thumb is better than any measuring cup**

A lot of diet programs, especially the very low calories programs, require that you weigh and measure your food. Though this may be great for keeping you on track for your daily calorie goals, it's also a royal pain in the butt and a reason that many people have difficulty sticking with these kinds of diet programs. I much prefer to simply eyeball amounts and skip on seconds.

One thing that I've found to be very helpful in avoiding the temptation of going back for seconds is cooking just enough for a single serving. Of course, this becomes challenging when cooking for more than one person, but it can still be done if you prepare just enough for single servings all around – just don't put serving bowls and platters on the table. Yes, easier said than done. It works out in my own case since my wife is a vegetarian and we prepare separate meals though we'll sometimes share a veggie side dish.

The old adage “don't eat servings bigger than the palm of your hand” when it comes to meat, fish, or poultry is a good one. It may seem like a paltry amount, but when combined with a salad starter and one or two vegetable sides, it should be plenty to satisfy most appetites. By limiting your portion sizes when preparing your food, you can overcome the old “your eyes are bigger than your stomach” syndrome.

## **Savor your food**

As mentioned previously, there is a satiety delay that's naturally built into our nervous systems. If you tend to wolf down your food then you'll get way out in front of the signal that you're full. Instead, try slowing down a bit and take smaller bites of your food. Also try holding each bite of food in your mouth a bit longer in order to savor the full flavor pleasure it produces. Thoroughly chewing your food not only will help prevent indigestion, but will also allow the feeling

of fullness to catch up with your fork. And you don't need to get carried away and count to twenty or some ridiculous number before swallowing like diet programs from the 1960s advocated!

Here's a great video that discusses the concept of "Mindful Eating." Somewhat of a Zen approach to food and eating, but it beautifully embodies everything I've discussed in this post – except for the last part about avoiding meat!

### **Don't be afraid of snacking**

The debate continues to rage over the risks and benefits of snacking. I read an article recently that advocated against snacking and that we should all stick to three "squares" a day in order to avoid getting fat. Like most Americans, I was raised on the joys of snacking from a very early age. Now, I don't disagree that snacking indiscriminately on junk food is a sure path to trouble, but small snacks consisting of healthy food selections are what get me through my day. They also are a big help in allowing me to keep my regular "squares" down to a reasonable size. Simply knowing that in an hour or two that I can take a break and grab something to eat helps me push away from the table with greater ease. Eating several smaller "meals" spaced more evenly throughout the day also makes things easier on your digestive system as well as your metabolism.

### **Leftovers are your friend**

Many times I'll make a bit extra food and will save or freeze for it another meal. This also works very well when dining out as portion sizes tend to be exceedingly oversized in many American eating establishments. Being able to pull a saved meal from either the fridge or the freezer and reheating in the microwave or oven can be a huge time saver. That goes double when packing meals for school or work.

Embarking on a fat loss program, regardless if it's low carb

or otherwise, really should start with examining the total quantity of food you're consuming. I think in many cases that you find it's more than you truly need and in a few cases, way more than your body requires for its basic metabolism. Taking control by using these few simple rules of portion control can go a long way towards helping you achieve your nutritional and weight loss goals.