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Overeating? How Mindfulness Can Help You Lose Weight

We know that “mindless eating”—whether snacking at work or watching TV with a giant bag of Tostitos—leads to overeating. But a quick “mindfulness” meditation before you eat could help you feel fuller sooner and eat less, according to a recent study in the [Journal of Consumer Research](#).



“Mindfulness—heightened attention to the present moment—can be a powerful tool to prevent overeating. Our research found that even a short mindfulness exercise prior to a meal helped consumers increase awareness of internal body signals, sense when they’d eaten enough, and adjust their intake,” write authors Evelien van de Veer, Erica van Herpen, and Hans C. M. van Trijp (all Wageningen University).

Through a series of studies, the authors showed the connection between mindfulness and food intake. As anticipated, consumers who tested higher on a scale for inherent mindfulness made adjustments in food choices based on prior calorie intake that day. Those who had consumed more calories earlier in the day chose lower-calorie snacks; those who had consumed less earlier selected larger snacks.

Surprisingly, even participants without previous mindfulness training benefited dramatically (and unwittingly) from a brief mindfulness meditation before a meal by sensing when they had eaten enough. The focus of the meditation, however, needed to be directed inward, on internal body sensations such as hunger, thirst, heartbeat or breathing, rather than on external objects or surroundings.

“Our bodies come equipped with a feedback system to help regulate how much we eat, but distractions divert our attention from these signals, leading to overeating and even obesity. A simple mindfulness meditation, tuning back into the body, can lead people to unconsciously moderate their next meal and feel full sooner. Furthermore, a consistent mindfulness practice could have exciting implications for those struggling to control their weight,” the authors conclude.

Evelien van de Veer, Erica van Herpen, and Hans C. M. van Trijp. “[Body and Mind: Mindfulness Helps Consumers to Compensate for Prior Food Intake by Enhancing the Responsiveness to Physiological Cues](#).” *Journal of Consumer Research*: February 2016.



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