

Strategies to control appetite

Hunger can be a formidable foe, especially for people attempting to lose weight. When hunger strikes, various appetite-control strategies can help people avoid overeating or eating during those times when boredom is more to blame than an empty belly.

- Eat slowly. When a person eats, a series of signals are sent to the brain from digestive hormones secreted by the gastrointestinal tract. These signals produce a feeling of pleasure and satiety in the brain, but it can take awhile for the brain to receive them. By chewing slowly, people can give the signals more time to reach their brains, potentially preventing them from overeating.

- Choose the right snacks. The right snacks can make it easier to eat more slowly. Instead of reaching for potato chips or pretzels, both

of which can be eaten quickly and picked up by the handful, choose snacks that are both healthy and require a little work. Carrots dipped in hummus or baked tortilla chips with low-fat salsa or bean dip are low-calorie snacks that also require some work between bites. The time it takes to dip between bites affords more time for the digestive tract to release signals to the brain that you're full.

- Reach for fiber first. Another way to conquer hunger without overeating is to reach for fiber before eating other parts of your meal. Vegetables are rich in fiber, but since veggies are often served as side dishes, many people tend to eat them only after they've eaten their main courses. That can contribute to overeating. Fiber fills you up, so by eating the high-fiber portions of your meal first, you're less likely to

overeate before your brain receives the signals that your stomach is full. Consider eating vegetables as an appetizer or, if the entire meal is served at once, clear your plate of vegetables before diving into the main course or other side dishes.

- Drink water. Perhaps the best, and least expensive, way to control appetite and ensure you don't overeat is to drink more water. A 2010 study funded by the Institute for Public Health and Water Research that included 48 adults between the ages of 55 and 75 found that people who drank two eight-ounce glasses of water right before a meal consumed 75 to 90 fewer calories during the ensuing meal than study participants who did not consume water prior to their meals. Over the course of 12 weeks, participants who drank water before meals three



times per day lost roughly five pounds more than those who did not increase their water intake.

Controlling appetite does not have to be a complex undertaking. In fact, some of the simplest strategies can be highly effective.

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