

# Nutrition Connection

The latest news and events from the [Kendall Anderson Nutrition Center](#) at Colorado State University

## The Art of Eating Mindfully

Mindful eating is the practice of being conscious and fully present when eating. It means you remove all distractions and judgements, and focus your attention on your meal, eating with the intention of nourishing your body. When you eat mindfully, you become attuned to the tastes, textures, smells, and colors of food, making mealtime more enjoyable.



Mindful eating is a very useful practice for weight management, as well as correcting overeating and disordered eating patterns. It has been shown to be a valuable tool for the management of type II diabetes as well as an effective way to lower stress levels.

Read on for tips to practice mindful eating, and enjoy your next bite more fully!



## Setting the Stage for Mindful Eating

Want to start eating mindfully? Create the right environment by following the tips below.

- Eat sitting at a table, with a place setting and a little ambiance.
- Remove any distractions, such as a TV, computer, or phone.
- Avoid multitasking. Set aside time to eat, trying not to eat at your desk or in the car.
- Eat with utensils, setting them down between bites as a reminder to eat slowly and deliberately.
- Place foods in a bowl or on a plate to make them visible, rather than eating from a bag or a box.
- Make mealtimes social for a more enjoyable experience.

## Understanding Hunger Cues

*Tap into your natural hunger signals to avoid overeating!*

Your body has a natural system to gauge its energy needs, which signals you to eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full. This system is regulated by hormones, including *ghrelin*, the hunger hormone, and *leptin*, the fullness or satiety hormone. These hormones send the cues that allow your body to regulate how much food is eaten, in an attempt to maintain your body's weight and energy balance.



Unfortunately, there are different ways that this system can be disrupted or overridden. When you are stressed, emotionally eating, or distracted, it is easy to become disconnected from the subtle cues of hunger and fullness, allowing overeating to occur.

Mindful eating is a useful tool in combating this pattern. It keeps you focused on the act of eating, allowing you to tune in to how hungry or full your body is. As you eat more slowly, your brain can catch up with your stomach before you overeat.

## Using a Hunger/Fullness Scale

Another great way to curb overeating is through the use of a hunger/fullness scale. The low end of the scale represents when you are so far past hungry you are ravenous. The other end represents when you are overly stuffed, such as after a second helping of Thanksgiving dinner.

Learn to respond to more gentle cues of hunger and fullness. Start to eat when you are around a 3 or a 4, when you start to feel hungry and your stomach feels empty. Do not wait until you are starving, which can cause swings in blood sugar and lend itself to overeating.

Stop eating when you reach about an 8, feeling satisfied and content. It takes time for your body to register when you are full. If you stop before you reach a 10, it can help you avoid eating more food than you need.

I'm starving and light headed	My stomach is empty and growling	I am starting to feel hungry	I don't feel hungry or full	I am slightly satisfied	I feel satisfied and content	I feel too full
0	2	4	5	6	8	10

# Kale and White Bean Soup

Use this soup to test your mindful eating skills in the activity below.

## Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- 8 garlic cloves, crushed or minced
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cups kale, chopped
- 4 cups low-fat, low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 (15 ounce) cans white beans, cannellini or navy, drained and rinsed
- 4 plum tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tbsp. Italian seasoning
- 1/2 tsp. dried chili pepper flakes
- 1 cup chopped parsley

## Directions:

1. Sauté garlic and onion in the oil until soft. Add kale and cook until wilted.
2. Add 3 cups of broth, 2 cups of beans, tomatoes, herbs, and chili pepper. Simmer 5 minutes.
3. Blend remaining beans and broth until smooth. Stir into soup to thicken. Simmer 15 minutes.
4. Ladle into bowls; sprinkle with chopped parsley.

**Serving size:** 1 cup      **Yield:** 8 servings



Image from <https://flic.kr/p/1W1U13>

## Mindful Eating Activity:

Use this guide to begin a mindful eating practice.

- Start by inhaling the steam coming off of the soup, appreciating its aroma.
- Take a moment to appreciate the appearance of the soup, observing the different colors and shapes.
- Take a spoonful of soup. Note how the vegetables taste individually, as well as the combined taste when eaten together.
- Continue to eat your soup slowly and mindfully, setting your spoon down between each bite.
- Stop eating when you are satisfied and at an 8 on the hunger/fullness scale. Note any emotions that arose while doing this activity.

## Nutritional Information/ Amount per serving:

Calories	185	Protein	12 g
Total fat	3.2 g	Total Carbohydrates	35.6 g
Saturated fat	0.6 g	Dietary Fiber	6.8 g
Cholesterol	0 mg	Sodium	56.2 mg



