

Listen To Your Body

Eat when you are truly hungry. Stop when you are full.



National Eating Disorders Association

Searching for the perfect diet? Always worrying about counting calories and fat grams in order to control your weight can be difficult and tiresome. Is there really a “perfect diet” out there anyway? After all, 95% of attempts to diet fail not because there’s something wrong with you, but because diets don’t work. Why else would people have to keep searching for new ones all of the time?

When was the last time you truly had fun dieting? Most likely you won’t remember it as a pleasurable experience. After all, it doesn’t feel so great to get hungry for lunch but force yourself to wait an extra hour. Do you remember feeling irritable? Did you get a headache or feel your stomach growling? And didn’t those “forbidden” or “off limits” foods seem to be calling your name even more than usual? It’s not very much fun, is it?

The reason strict diets don’t work and aren’t much fun is because your body needs food for energy, just like a car needs gas to drive. Food is fuel for your body! Your body knows what it needs in order to keep running efficiently—it needs the fuel of vitamin and nutrient-rich foods from a variety of food groups. That’s why it’s important to listen to your body and respond to its natural hunger. It will tell you what it needs. And if you don’t listen, it will find ways to keep reminding you—like headaches, a growling stomach, and obsessing about food.

- ➔ The first key to listening to your body is being able to detect when you are getting hungry. If you are indeed truly hungry, and not just looking for food to cure your boredom, stress, or loneliness, then it is time to refuel.
- ➔ The second key is being able to know when you have had enough. Listen to your body. When you begin to feel full, you will know that you have had enough to eat. The goal is to feel content—not uncomfortably stuffed but not starving either. For some people this means planning 5 or 6 smaller, well-balanced meals a day instead of 3 large meals. And remember, it takes about 20 minutes for your body to realize it’s full. Be aware of what you are eating—eat sitting down, chew slowly, enjoy the tastes, smells, and textures of your food. Learn about mindful or intuitive eating.

→ The third key is moderation, nothing to extremes. Often people hear this advice and think it means they can eat whatever they crave, all the time. Obviously we cannot survive on potato chips or peanut butter cookies alone. And if you tried, chances are you'd probably start to crave a balanced meal or fresh fruit or vegetables after a while. These cravings are your body's way of helping you get the nutrients it knows you need.

Eat what you want, when you are truly hungry. Stop when you're full. And eat exactly what appeals to you. Do this instead of any diet, and you're likely to maintain a healthy weight and avoid eating disorders.