Chewing

Eating begins with the simple act of chewing. Chewing leads to smooth digestion and greater assimilation of nutrients by initiating the release of digestive enzymes that break down food.

Carbohydrate digestion begins in the mouth with chewing. Chewing also makes fats, proteins and minerals available for maximum absorption. Whole food carbohydrates, especially whole grains, must be mixed with saliva and chewed until they become liquid to release their full nutritional value. You may also notice that the more that you chew whole (complex) carbohydrate foods, the sweeter they taste. Because digestion becomes more efficient when you chew your food thoroughly, your body will begin to feel wonderfully lighter after meals.

How to Chew Properly. Here’s how to get started in the habit of chewing correctly:

- To help with focus (and breaking the habit of eating quickly) try counting the chews in each bite. It helps if you put your fork down between every bite. To begin, chew every mouthful of food at least 20 times each – maybe 30 or more eventually, whatever it takes until the food becomes liquid before swallowing.
- Chewing breaks down food into tiny bits and makes it easier on the stomach and small intestine to digest. Saliva assists in the digestion of carbohydrates.
- If you feel compelled to swallow before you’ve finished chewing enough times, simply move the food over to the side in your mouth and swallow saliva (as you would with chewing gum). Then bring the food back out into the center of your mouth to finish chewing.

If under pressure at meals, take deep breaths, chew, and let the simple act of chewing relax you. Taking the time to chew will help you to enjoy the whole spectrum of tastes and aromas in the meal.

Mindful Eating Suggestions

Before eating
- Shower or wash hands and face.
- Turn off the television, radio, telephone. Ideally, do not read either
- Find a clean quiet place to eat. Perhaps light a candle or play soft music.
- Stretch, breathe.
- Say a prayer or reflect on your gratitude for the meal.
- Align your posture and breathe.

During your meal
- Place a bite of food in your mouth.
- Put your utensil down.
- Place your hands together or rest them calmly while chewing.
- Begin chewing and deep breathing.
- Concentrate on what you’re doing. Enjoy and savor each bit of the food
- Look at your food or something attractive. Or if you like, close your eyes partially or fully.
- If you are enjoying the company of someone else, keep the conversation light and pleasant.

After eating
- Reflect on your gratitude for the meal.
- Sit and talk after your meal.
- Take a light stroll.