

Examination of current eating practices can help you to identify personal and meaningful behavior changes that may be limiting your optimal health and performance goals. Food journaling is a great way to become more aware of your current food behaviors.

Practice mindful eating. Many times we eat when we're not *really* hungry - out of stress, boredom or the desire to be sociable. Ask yourself what's influencing your current eating practices. Normal eating is flexible, however, excessive intake and or eating for reasons other than hunger, may contribute to unnecessary weight gain and health problems.

Record the following items on your food records to identify patterns.

Food. Your Registered Dietitian will guide you on what information is appropriate for journaling purposes.

Hunger. Use a hunger scale to measure your appetite to develop an intuitive eating style – eating according to your hunger. Limit extremes to maintain a healthy weight. Use a scale from 1 (starved) to 10 (stuffed), 5 = normal (not hungry/or full).

Time. Keep track of your eating schedule to keep your mind and body properly fueled throughout the day.

Location, Activity, Position. Where do you consume most of your energy? (In the car, at the kitchen table, in front of the television, at your desk in front of your computer). What are you doing? (driving, reading, working). What is your position (standing, seated).

Mood & Energy. Are there emotional cues that contribute to your dietary intake? Use a scale to accurately measure your feelings and energy.
Anxiety 1 (low) – 5 (high) Happiness 1 - 5 Energy 1 - 5

After you have kept a food journal, you will be able to answer the following questions. Use the food records to identify problem-eating behaviors. Create new, healthy behavior change goals to address problems.

- Are you hungry? If you are unsure, try the 4 “D’s to test: Distance yourself from the food (get out of the kitchen); Delay yourself from eating for 10-15 minutes while you Distract yourself by doing something that keeps your attention. Then DECIDE, do you still feel hungry?
- Are there certain, stressful situations which trigger under/overeating? Try a five-minute relaxation break, breathing deeply or gazing out a window to clear your head. Get involved in another activity - go for an invigorating walk or take a quick stroll around the office. Steer clear of the kitchen, cafeteria or vending machines!
- Are you eating out of boredom? Find a way to get out of your routine - take a swimming or dancing class, find a new task to take on at work, volunteer or start a craft or a home-improvement project.
- Do you eat to reward yourself? Find a non-caloric and equally enjoyable substitute, such as a call to a far-away friend, a game of golf, a weekend hiking or biking excursion or your favorite section of the daily paper.