

Intuitive Eating



What is intuitive eating?

Intuitive eating is a lifestyle that encourages people to listen to their bodies and their hunger and fullness cues when deciding what and when to eat. It is evidence-based and helps people to develop a healthy relationship with food, no matter what their body weight, size, or shape looks like.

Intuitive eating takes time to learn and develop. A WIC nutritionist can help you to learn about intuitive eating and start applying it to your life.

1 Reject the Diet Mentality

Let go of self-blame if a diet doesn't work. Most diets promise fast and easy weight loss. But when people stop the diet, most will gain the weight back and may even gain more. Get rid of dieting tools, such as meal plans, strict eating schedules, and strict portion control. Intuitive eating is not a diet, it is a lifestyle change.

2 Honor Your Hunger

Eat enough food to keep your body satisfied. Listen to your body's hunger cues and follow them. Hunger cues can include:

- Stomach rumbling
- Stomach pain
- Lightheadedness
- Feeling grumpy or faint
- Difficulty concentrating
- Headache

3 Make Peace with Food

Give yourself permission to eat as much and any foods that you would like. This can be a scary feeling, but can help to decrease cravings, binges, and guilt over time. Remember, no single food has the power to make you healthy or not.

4 Challenge the Food Police

The Food Police are the messages that create strict rules for which foods are "good" or "bad". Challenge this way of thinking by following your body's hunger and fullness cues and remembering that all foods fit in a healthy diet.

5 Discover the Satisfaction Factor

Enjoy your food: Eat what you really want, in an inviting environment, and notice how satisfied you feel. This can help you to listen to your body and know when you've eaten enough. Try these steps to feel satisfied while eating:

- Ask yourself what you really want to eat. Think about the taste, texture, smell, temperature, and appearance of foods.
- Sit down for meals, take deep breaths while eating, and notice your senses while you eat.
- Eat a variety of foods each day.
- Don't feel pressured to finish foods if they do not taste good to you.
- Check in with yourself during the meal. Ask yourself if the food still tastes and feels good. If it doesn't, then stop eating it.

6 Feel Your Fullness

Listen to your body's cues that it is no longer hungry. Intuitive Eaters learn to stop eating when they feel comfortably full without being overfull. Try these tips while learning to listen to your body's fullness cues:

- Pause while eating to notice how full you are. Remember that you do not have to eat everything on your plate.
- Eat without distractions, such as the TV or social media.
- Say no to people who try to pressure you into eating more than your body wants.
- Choose to eat foods that have fiber, complex carbohydrates, and some protein and fat throughout the day. These foods will keep you feeling full between snacks and meals.

7 Cope with Kindness

Find kind ways to comfort, nurture, distract, and resolve your emotions. Using food to cope with emotions can cause short-term comfort, distraction, or numbing, but won't solve the emotion. Eating to cope with emotions can cause guilt in the long run. To cope with emotions without using food, try talking about your emotions, asking people for help, and using other hobbies or activities.

8 Respect Your Body

Rejecting the diet mentality can be hard if you are overly critical about your body size and shape. Work to accept your body as it is. Everyone's body is different, and all bodies deserve love and respect. Shift your focus from what your body looks like to what it can do. Respect your body by treating it well, buying clothes that make you feel comfortable and confident, and by avoiding comparing your body to other people's bodies.

9 Movement – Feel the Difference

Focus on how it feels to move your body, rather than focusing on calories. When being active, try using the following tips:

- Find movement that feels good to you. You don't need to do any type of activity or exercise that you don't enjoy.
- Be active throughout the day. This can be in simple ways, like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or parking farther away from a store.
- Make movement fun. Instead of focusing on targets like time or intensity, choose activities that you enjoy. Try a variety of exercises, such as aerobic exercise, strength training, and stretching.
- Make movement a priority. Consistently make time to move your body each day.
- Wear comfortable workout clothes that make you feel confident.
- Remember to rest. Being less active for a few days or weeks will not make or break your health.

10 Honor Your Health – Gentle Nutrition

This last step is what separates intuitive eating from other short-term diets. Intuitive eating is about making long-term changes to your health, including your physical health, your emotional health, and your mental health. To honor your health, choose foods that are healthy and that you enjoy. Remember that you don't have to eat perfectly every day to be healthy – health is about your eating patterns over time. Try to eat mostly unprocessed foods, lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and a variety of proteins and fish. Try to drink enough water each day.

Reference: Intuitive Eating, 4th Edition: A Revolutionary Anti-Diet Approach by Evelyn Tribole MS, RDN, CEDRD-S and Elyse Resch MS, RDN, CEDRD-S, FAND