

How you eat is just as important as what you eat!

March is Nutrition Month and this year, Canadian dietitians are talking about how healthy eating is about so much More than Food! Registered Dietitians are encouraging Canadians to consider not only what they eat, but how they eat too.

The “how” component of the entire eating experience is crucial in developing how to get maximum benefits from “what” we eat. The new Canada Food Guide outlines many important aspects of good eating, namely mindfulness, cooking more often, eating with others, and enjoying your food.

Mindfulness

Picture this, you sit down to watch one of your favorite shows with a new bag a chips. While watching your show, you reach into the bag and find it empty....where did all of the chips go? How could the bag be empty already? This is a prime example of “mindless eating.” How can we focus on eating and enjoy our food when we are doing something else? When we are distracted and doing other things while eating, it is very easy to not listen to our body and pay attention to our fullness cues. In distracted situations, we often will eat too much and too fast. With mindful eating, the idea is to really focus on eating your food – savoring every morsel. By eating mindfully and immersing yourself into the act of eating, you can cue into your body’s hunger and fullness cues, and even better, get the most from your food. Mindful eating does take practice, so why not try for one meal in the next week to turn off all devices and really pay attention to every single bite. Pay attention to the flavour and texture of the first few bites, then pause mid-meal and do a food check in. Ask yourself “are you satisfied or still hungry?” “Does the food still taste good?” Experience how much more you notice when you slow down.

Another way to incorporate mindful eating, is to really turn up your awareness of your own eating behaviours. Ask yourself questions about where you are eating, why are you eating, when you are eating and how you are eating. Being more mindful about your eating can help you in the long run. Once you identify and are aware of your own eating environment and cues, you will end up making healthier choices more often and make any necessary positive changes to your own eating patterns.

Cooking more often

If we look back at 30-40 years ago, most Canadian families were doing the bulk of their cooking at home. This is no longer the case. According to Stats Canada, 54% of Canadians are eating out at restaurants or purchasing take-out food once a week or more. Evidence suggests the practice of home cooking and cooking skills are declining. Canada’s Food Guide lists many benefits of cooking at home more often. Cooking and preparing food does not only support health eating habits, but allows you to:



- Learn new skills
- Rely less on highly processed foods
- Control the amount of added sauces and seasonings
- Make foods that you and your family will like and will eat
- Save money
- Choose healthy ingredients – fruits, vegetables, whole grains

Eating with others

What is it about eating with others that makes a meal more than just a meal? Research suggests communal eating promotes health benefits that extend beyond merely eating in the company of others. With the fast paced lives, we have become accustomed to, we are eating fewer meals together. Eating with others whether it is with family, friends, neighbours or coworkers has many benefits - It is an opportunity for people to get together, connect and add enjoyment to life. Other benefits outlined by Canada's Food Guide are:

- Enjoy quality time together
- Share food traditions across generations and cultures
- Explore new healthy foods that you might not normally try

Eating with others does not need to be anything fancy or saved for special events or celebrations. It can be a simple a meal of toast and eggs, as long as it is together.

Enjoy your food

Sounds like a simple thing to do but for many of us, we have forgotten how to just take the time and enjoy and take pleasure in what we are eating. We are rushed and busy with the demands of modern life, but taking the time to enjoy your food has many benefits:

- You end up being more open to trying new foods
- Develop an overall healthy attitude about food (Canada's food guide)
- Will provide with a sense of satisfaction which in turn will give you the sense that you have eaten enough

“When you eat what you really want, in an environment that is inviting, the pleasure you derive will be a powerful force in helping you feel satisfied and content.” - dietitians Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch.

Visit www.nutritionmonth2020.ca for more recipes and information on these themes.

To find a Registered Dietitian in your area email wellness@ierha.ca or call toll free 1-977-979-WELL (9355).



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