

Are Your Eating Lights On?

Do any of these food situations apply to you? Check all that apply from the past week:

- eat out of a chip bag while watching TV
- finish child's or spouse's meal when they have leftovers
- cook and taste test
- eat leftovers while putting food away
- eat samples from the grocery store while shopping
- imbibe in snacks in stores or vending machines
- drink a can of soda
- sports beverages or energy bars
- work colleague who has candy bowl
- whole box of cookies disappears
- cream and sugar in coffee
- dessert after dinner every night
- favorite coffee bar with snacks



How many times have you eaten and not even realized what you ate or better yet, how much? As a student of eating behavior, I encourage people to “eat with their lights on.” Eating with the lights on implies that someone is home. You know and realize WHAT and HOW MANY calories you are eating. It is “mindful eating.” In the dark crevices of your day, there may be a mini-candy bar or two, a handful of jelly beans, a half-bag of Sunchips and a dollop of heavy whipped cream in your coffee. It all creates an excess...and that can mean one thing: weight gain – especially if you are not actively burning up the extra energy. So turn the lights on even in the smallest of eating moments...

Let's face it food takes us to a different place, at least temporarily. That's not always a bad thing – as rekindling that feeling of grandma's brownies or mom's apple pie or family meals is perfectly life enhancing. It's when, we eat often without intention or purpose that weight and health can spiral out of control.

Here are some simple switches you can flip to create a more mindful, well-lit eating path for life.

Choose low. Choose foods that are low in calorie density - like fruits and vegetables. Plan them in your day and have them ready when you are on the run.

Make it real. Cook at home more, choose water instead of drinks that are high in calories.

Sit down and savor. Use your eating time as a break from standing, walking and running to/from places. Create a kitchen nook, a work place table or window side seat for a nutritious respite.

Break bread together. Share your favorite food with family, friends and your community. Research has shown that when people cook, eat and enjoy food together they live happier, healthier and longer lives.

So whenever you want to eat in the dark, at least light a candle – it will spark some good eating intention.

By Victoria Shanta Retelny, RD.

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