



# Why Do We Eat?

*(When we don't even want to?)*



September 2012

Is there a health topic you want to know more about? For more information about fitness, education and nutrition, or other health programs, contact Grace Keith, Health Educator, 850.926.0400 x. 215 or Grace\_Keith@doh.state.fl.us

We've all eaten something when we weren't truly hungry. While that's OK from time to time, too much eating without thinking can really hurt your weight management goals. And depending on what you eat, it can hurt your health, too. Here are ten reasons we find ourselves eating when we're not even hungry. Recognize any?

**Emotions** - if you eat in order to cope with emotions (happiness, sadness, depression, anger, etc.) you won't resolve the underlying issues. Keep a journal of when you eat and what you eat. *Ask yourself, "What am I feeling right now?"*



**Boredom** - many people think eating seems like a good solution when there's nothing better to do. There are all those yummy snacks in the kitchen! Or a great ice cream shop just down the road. Grazing is an easy way to add lots of calories to your daily intake and for no good reason. *Ask yourself, "Is there something else I can do instead of eating?"*



**Belonging** - when you are with a group and a meal or snack is served it's hard not to partake. Eating with family and friends is an enjoyable social event and we tend to eat/overeat when we are listening to conversations, laughing and talking. We also want to avoid being questioned about why we are not eating! Remember when second helpings are served, it takes 12-20 minutes for your brain to tell your stomach that it's full. *Ask yourself after you finish most of your meal, "Am I really still hungry?"*

**Availability** - Not many of us can pass up a bowl of chips or candy. We may buy sweets or snacks that we know are not good for us and we put them away so that we won't eat them until the time is "right." But, if that food still "calls" to you, you need to get rid of it - and not by eating it! Serve it to your family or take it to work and share with coworkers. Do not keep it around and don't buy it again. Better yet, replace it with healthy foods instead. *Before you buy the food, ask yourself, "Why am I buying this? How will I use it and when?"*

**Celebrating** - How can you pass up a piece of birthday cake or some special food when there is a celebration going on? Don't get in line for a piece of cake! Celebrate the person, not the food! Or ask the organizer of the party if you can bring an alternative food choice - a fruit bowl, healthy snacks, etc. *Ask yourself, "How will eating this cake help make the occasion special?"* If you can't answer, get out of the cake line!

**Energy Slumps** - Everyone knows the dreaded afternoon slump! We typically leave our task and go in search of food - snacks, sweets, soda, etc. - that will help get us re-energized and back to work. The problem is that as quickly as the sugar jumpstarts our system, our system crashes just as quickly. This makes for a vicious cycle of eating for energy, crashing then eating again. Instead of snacking, get up and walk around for a few minutes, stand at your desk and do some stretching, go in search of a glass or bottle of cold water. *Ask yourself, "What else will revive me other than food?"*



**Timing** - For years we have taught people they need to eat three meals a day. We've become conditioned to eat at noon whether we are hungry or not. Just because the clock says it's time that you *should* eat doesn't mean you *must* eat. Listen to your "body clock." *Ask yourself, "Am I really hungry or is it just because it's time to eat?"* (And - it's really okay to eat earlier if your body needs food!)



**Free for the Taking** - If something is free, we can hardly resist it! We convince ourselves that the two-for-one sales ploys in the grocery store is a good thing. Sometimes it is but often we choose the wrong items. Very few people really *need* to buy one bag of cookies and get *another bag* for “free.” In many stores, there are free samples from vendors, if you eat enough samples, you’ve almost added another meal to your day. **Ask yourself, “Do I really need both of these?”** And as you pass the free samples, simply say, “No thank-you.”

**Saying No** - to food pushers can be really hard! Many people equate love with food. Everyone knows a mom or grandmother that forces food to be passed endlessly during a meal and then laments how “no one ate anything.” Food is also a social tool, its consumption makes a host or hostess feel successful. We all want praise for our efforts when providing meals or snacks. But that doesn't mean that you have to overeat to prove your appreciation! Have a number of reasons you choose to pass on another helping. **Ask yourself, “Who is control of how much I am eating?”** Make sure the answer is, “ME!”

**Old Rules** - being a member of “The Clean Plate Club,” was a great accomplishment when many of us were children. As adults, it’s a dubious distinction! You do not have to eat food just because it is on your plate. It’s best to leave a bite or two of everything and not overeat. This problem occurs when we eat out as well. We don’t want to waste the food we’ve paid for. And you don’t have to, ask the server to wrap it to take home. Enjoy it the next day for lunch or dinner! **Ask yourself, “Why am I eating all of this food if I really don’t want to?”**



not

For every reason you find to eat, there is a reason NOT to eat when it’s appropriate. **The key is to eat mindfully.** Think about what, when, why and for whom are you eating. Answer these questions honestly and you’ll find yourself eating better, snacking less and feeling good

**Basic First Aid...** The next class will be on Thursday, September 20, 7-9 p.m. at the Health Department. The course is endorsed by the American Safety and Health Institute. Call 926-0400, ext. 215 for more information or to register for a class. The cost is \$25.00 per person.



The next Hands-only CPR class is on Thursday, September 27, 7-9 p.m. at the Health Department. The course is endorsed by the American Safety and Health Institute. Call 926-0400, ext. 215 for more information or to register for a class. The cost is \$25.00 per person.

The Wakulla County Health Department now has a Service Provider Kiosk to help you find who and what you are looking for. The kiosk is located in the lobby of the Health Department, which is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

You can search sites such as 211Big Bend, Whole Child Leon, Florida Department of Children and Families and Wakulla County Coalition for Youth Resource Directory. Many providers are local and have sliding scales for those families in crisis. You can find all types of services from daily needs to emergency assistance. This service is also very helpful in the event that you have just moved into the area. The kiosk and electronic referral system were made possible through a grant sponsored by the Blue Foundation of Florida. There is no charge to use the kiosk.

