

Cooperative Extension

Using Mindfulness: Be at Peace with Your Food

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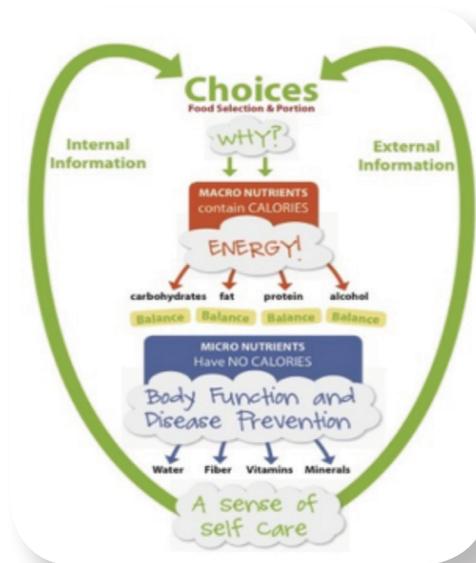
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Mindfulness is an umbrella term for many principles and ancient practices stemming from many religions and cultures. It is defined by many professionals in a variety of disciplines differently and encompasses many different practices.

Mindfulness uses techniques such as meditation, which focuses one’s full attention on the present, experiencing thoughts, feelings, and sensations, but not judging them. Jon Kabat-Zin, a leader in the area of mindfulness and stress reduction, describes it as: “Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose and in the present moment, not judging yourself or others.” When a person is mindful, they focus on the present moment, try not to think about anything that went on in the past or that might be coming up in future; purposefully concentrating on what’s happening around them; and trying not to be judgmental about themselves and their own behaviors.

Mindful eating is an extension of the mindfulness concept. Researchers such as Jean Kristeller, a psychologist, have advanced the use of mindful eating from a tool used to control clinical binge eating, to one that can be used to address mainstream “disordered eating”, weight management, and even diabetes self-management. When referring to eating, mindfulness helps a person better understand their thoughts and feelings that go along with their eating behaviors. With practice, mindfulness cultivates the possibility of freeing oneself of reactive, habitual patterns of thinking, feeling and acting. It promotes balance, choice, wisdom and acceptance of what is. Mindful eating strategies refer to building long-term, healthy food habits that improve food choices and food behaviors through a slower, more intuitive way of eating. This includes noticing the colors, smells, flavors, and textures of food; chewing slowly; getting rid of distractions like TV or reading; and learning to cope with feelings such as guilt and anxiety about food.

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Benefits to Mindful Eating:

Mindful eating has become a popular strategy to improve health and wellness across the lifespan and encourage a more positive lifelong relationship with food. Possible benefits of mindful eating include:

Regulating the digestive system:

- **Understanding cues** to eat when your body is hungry and stop when it is full
- **Reducing temptations** to eat due to stress or boredom
- **Eating slowly** to give your body time to digest

Regulating weight:

- **Reducing binge-eating**
- **Decreasing the rate of emotional eating**
- **Increasing internal awareness** of hunger signals

The benefits of mindful eating can also positively affect individuals in unexpected ways. Stephanie Meyers, MS, RD/LDN, a dietitian at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, teaches patients mindful eating principles to improve dietary habits during their cancer recovery periods. The dietitian and her

team use mindful eating strategies as part of clinical interventions with survivors of head and neck cancer. With the help of mindful eating, survivors learn strategies to make the transition back to eating more manageable, less overwhelming, and ultimately more successful.

Strategies for Mindful Eating:

Making small changes to how you eat and building an awareness of and appreciation for your food doesn't have to be challenging. Try these strategies to make mindful eating a part of your everyday relationship with food:

Slow Down: Remember when mom or dad advised you to chew more before swallowing as a kid? They were on to something. The brain takes about twenty minutes to register how much food is consumed, and identify feelings of fullness. Eating too fast can result in overeating. Train yourself to eat more slowly; allow your brain time to catch up with your stomach and small intestine; and savor every bite. Two easy strategies to get you started:

- **Use chopsticks instead of a fork.** It will force you to eat more slowly. Once you're comfortable with the slower pace, switch back to a fork – but remember to keep the pace slow.
- **Cut your food into smaller pieces** and take smaller bites.

Timing: Anyone can experience mindful eating at any time, whether it's a snack or meal. However, most long-term benefits occur after practicing mindful eating regularly. Many cultures practice this idea by giving their full attention to their meals and appreciating the process of eating. For example, it is common for French meals to last up to two hours, especially during dinner. They reinforce this principle of slow eating so they can better enjoy their time with food and family. This principle can be easily applied to any meal. To start, try eating your meal over twenty minutes to slow down how long it takes you to eat.

Drop Your Distractions: Put down your phone; turn off your TV; and close up your laptop. In the digital world that society embraces today, it can be easy to multitask while eating. Although keeping a busy lifestyle has its benefits, it also prevents people from listening to their bodies. When the hustle and bustle of life starts to creep into how you eat, turn to eating in silence to reclaim your self-control with food. Before eating, turn off electronics and other distractions. Then, take several deep breaths and a pause before eating to identify with the intention behind your eating. Are you eating because of hunger? Or, are you eating because of stress or boredom.

Recreate Your Plate: Be wise in choosing what and how much you eat.

- **When shopping,** choose fewer processed foods; opt for fresh choices.

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VISIONS

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The Benefits of Eating Together for Older Adults

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According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 11 million people over the age of 65, live alone. Living alone may come with certain challenges, especially when it comes to mealtime. In the past, dinnertime provided an opportunity for families to gather, connect with each other and discuss the events of the day while enjoying a home-cooked meal. Research has shown that the togetherness experienced at mealtime can have a positive influence on emotional well-being. One out of five, or 20% of seniors reported that they felt loneliest when eating by themselves. The feeling of loneliness during mealtime can increase the risk of depression. Also, older adults who regularly eat alone are at a higher risk for malnutrition. Maintaining a healthy diet is important for an older adult's ability to fight infection, as well as, maintain healthy muscle mass, balance, cognitive functioning and overall independent living.

Changes in patterns of eating due to the natural process of aging, the presence of certain health conditions, finances, or the sheer desire to cook for oneself may also be influenced by whether or not older adults have someone to share a mealtime. As individuals age, seniors may notice a decrease in appetite due to their decreasing need for as many calories in their diet in comparison to when they were younger. For some individuals, the side effects of medication can lead to a lack of appetite and may even make food seem unappealing. For older adults with oral health concerns, such as poor fitting dentures or problems with swallowing, eating a healthy diet may become even more difficult.

Studies show that those who eat in a social or family environment naturally eat more food and generally make healthier food choices. For seniors living alone, the idea of cooking a big, healthy meal may seem pointless when faced with a lack of appetite and social isolation. Many will turn to pre-packaged convenience foods, frozen dinners, or may skip eating altogether. Although simple to prepare, some convenience foods are more likely to be high in sodium.



How Social Eating Can Help Seniors Stay Healthy

When mealtime is spent with others, stimulating conversation can make the mealtime last longer and create a more satisfying experience. Social dining and communal meals help seniors feel more relaxed; the focus is taken off of the food and placed more on the community and the environment. The enjoyment of company and a sense of belonging helps those who may not have a large appetite eat more. Keeping mealtime an enjoyable experience, rather than a chore, decreases the likelihood of it being skipped.

While taste and nutritional content of food is important to health and wellness, so is the feeling of community and fellowship that is associated with social eating. Often times, new relationships and friendships are made while seated around a table together. Incorporating these tips may help senior adults ward off malnutrition and the feelings of social isolation.

Tips: Eating With Others

- Look for congregate meals at local senior community centers.
- Set a regular schedule to eat meals with family or friends.
- Get to know a neighbor and set aside time to eat together.
- Seek out luncheons or dinners at your local church or community organization.
- Consider joining a club or organization.
- Evaluate the advantages of relocating to a senior-only residential community that hosts activities and meals.
- Explore your local farmer's market. Many have weekly tastings and activities.

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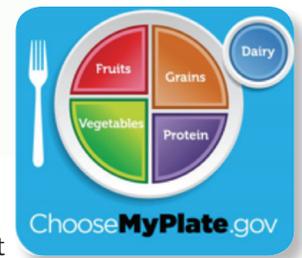
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Supplements: Helpful or All Hype?

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We've all seen the commercials and advertisements for supplements, but what exactly is a "supplement"? Does taking daily supplements really help you fill in the gaps of your diet? What about individual vitamins and minerals, do you need specific supplements in addition to a multi-vitamin? Here are answers to these important questions.

Q: What exactly is a supplement?

A: Dietary supplements are defined as products taken by mouth that contain a "dietary ingredient". According to the National Institutes of Health, dietary supplements come in a variety of forms such as tablets, capsules, powders, drinks, and energy bars. These can be a wide variety of vitamins, minerals, herbals and botanicals, amino acids, and enzymes. Examples are: a Zinc multi-vitamin, or Iron supplement, Turmeric or Garlic supplements and Coenzyme Q10.



Q: Is it really necessary to "fill in the gaps of your diet" with a multi-vitamin or other supplement?

A: Most people eating a healthy diet consisting of whole foods will be getting enough of the vitamins and minerals they need. The USDA uses MyPlate to outline how a well-rounded, healthy diet should look. MyPlate stresses the importance of making healthier choices from all five food groups to ensure you are getting all the nutrients you need. However, most people do not eat according to MyPlate's guidelines, as reported by the CDC. Only 14% of Americans eat 2 fruits and 3 vegetables a day. This is why taking a multi-vitamin may help fill in the gap on the days you can't consume the recommended amount of each food group.

Q: Why not use supplements instead of whole foods?

A: It may seem like taking a pill that contains many of the essential nutrients you need is the most convenient option. It appears you get the recommended amount of almost everything you need in an easy to swallow (or chew!) pill or gummy that goes down quick and easy. It requires none of the meal planning, thought, and preparation eating well sometimes takes. However, science has yet to create a match in pill form as compared to eating whole foods. There is no better way to get all the vitamins and minerals needed than consuming a well-balanced diet. When eating whole foods, you are getting all the benefits that food has to offer besides just a certain vitamin or mineral it may be rich in. Not to mention you satisfy your cravings and fill your tummy up with whole foods. Let's use broccoli as an example: broccoli is rich in vitamin C, however it is also rich in vitamin K, fiber, potassium, and folate. Broccoli also contains a compound known as sulforaphane, which research shows has anti-cancer properties. It is one of the healthiest additions you can add to a meal; low in calories, nutritionally rich, and who doesn't love that vibrant green standing out on their plate! Whole foods can provide additional benefits such as fiber and phytonutrients that aren't always in supplements. Additionally, the vitamins and nutrients found in whole foods are bioavailable, meaning they are in a form that makes it easy for our body to absorb.

Q: Is there anyone who needs to be taking supplements?

A: There are certain individuals who may need to supplement their diets with certain vitamins or minerals based on their age, gender, and health status.

Post-menopausal women should increase their intake of calcium and vitamin D to avoid developing osteoporosis. Calcium and vitamin D aide in the body's absorption of each other so it is recommended that they are taken together.

Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant should take a supplement containing folic acid to lower their unborn child's risk for certain birth defects. Generally, a prenatal multi-vitamin containing the recommended amount of folic acid will be prescribed by a doctor upon learning of her pregnancy or when she plans to become pregnant.

Individuals with pre-existing conditions such as anemia are at greater risk for nutrient deficiency. Anemia is a condition in which your body does not make enough healthy red blood cells or in which your blood cells do not function properly. If your iron levels are low, your doctor may prescribe an iron supplement.

Anyone who has difficulty maintaining a recommended daily regimen for healthy eating, may consider a multi-vitamin as an insurance policy that can be taken when there are gaps in your eating plan.

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Q: Are supplements safe to take if I choose to do so?

A: There is no guarantee that supplements are either safe or effective. The FDA neither approves or disapproves any dietary supplement for consumption. They have however established good manufacturing practices (GMPs) to ensure identity, purity, strength, and composition of supplement products on the market. There are a few independent organizations who offer quality testing of supplements, but this is not required by any federal agency in order for companies to sell their products. Passing of these quality tests is denoted by a “seal of approval” on packaging and tells the consumer that the product was properly manufactured, contains what the label says it does, and does not contain harmful levels of contaminants.

USP Verified Mark

During a climate of increased government scrutiny and consumer concerns about the quality of dietary supplements, the USP Dietary Supplement Verification Program helps enhance a manufacturer’s competitive position and brand recognition by promoting the manufacturer’s commitment to produce quality products for consumers.



A USP Verified Mark on a dietary supplement label indicates that the product:

- (1) Contains the ingredients listed on the label, in the declared potency and amounts.
- (2) Tests have shown that contents of some supplements don’t match the label and some contain significantly less or more than the claimed amount of key ingredients.
- (3) Helps assure customers that they are getting the value they expect from a product they are purchasing.
- (4) The product does not contain harmful levels of specified contaminants. Some supplements have been shown to contain harmful levels of certain heavy metals (e.g., lead and mercury), microbes, pesticides, or other contaminants. At specific levels, these contaminants can pose serious risks to one’s health.
- (5) Product will break down and release into the body within a specified amount of time. If a supplement does not break down properly to allow its ingredients to be available for absorption in the body, the consumer will not get the full benefit of its contents.
- (6) Products are tested against federally-recognized dissolution standards.
- (7) Products have been manufactured according to FDA current Good Manufacturing Practices using sanitary and well-controlled procedures.

Assurance of safe, sanitary, well-controlled, and well-documented manufacturing and monitoring processes, indicates that a supplement manufacturer is quality-conscious, and the supplement will be manufactured with consistent quality, from batch to batch.

Q. How do I obtain the USP Verification Mark?

A: Dietary supplement products that meet the program’s strict testing and evaluation criteria are awarded the distinctive USP Verified Mark. The Mark can be used on product labeling, packaging, and promotional materials to help distinguish USP Verified products in the marketplace and aid consumers in their decision-making process. Since the program’s inception, the USP Verified Mark has appeared on more than 700 million labels/packages of dietary supplements.

It is important to realize that in the United States, the food supply is fortified and enriched with quite a few vitamins and minerals. Refined grain products are enriched with B vitamins. Non-dairy beverages such as soy, coconut, and almond milk are fortified with calcium. Dairy milk while being high in calcium naturally, lacks vitamin D and is therefore fortified with it when processed. Supplementing these nutrients is typically unnecessary and can be expensive for those with a well-rounded diet.

It is important to know that you can experience toxicity of certain vitamins and minerals when your intake of them is too high. As mentioned above, dairy milk is fortified with vitamin D but did you know your body also produces vitamin D with exposure to sunlight? Fifteen minutes of sun exposure, two times a week, is enough for your body to produce sufficient amounts of vitamin D. Excess vitamin D consumption through supplementation can be quite dangerous, causing the body to deposit calcium in the kidneys, heart and blood vessels. Always consult your doctor first before starting or changing a supplement to ensure you do not expose yourself to any danger.

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Ten Tools and Techniques to Help Clients Improve Their Health and Personal Finances

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Two very important domains of people's lives are their health and personal finances. Fifteen years ago, in 2004, Rutgers Cooperative Extension created the Small Steps to Health and Wealth™ (SSHW) program to encourage New Jersey residents to make positive behavior changes to simultaneously improve both aspects of their lives. Since then, Cooperative Extension personnel in dozens of states and professionals in other practice settings have replicated SSHW.

Have you considered integrating a discussion of health behaviors into your financial education or counseling program? Perhaps you have, but don't know how to get started. The remainder of this article will describe ten steps that financial practitioners can take to help their clients understand health and financial relationships and make positive behavior changes.

- ✓ **Review the SSHW Web Site** - Dozens of educational materials about relationships between health and personal finances can be found at the SSHW public website (<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>) and the internal website for educators (<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/internal/>).
- ✓ **Take the Personal Health and Finance Quiz** - This 20-question quiz will provide insights into your own personal health and financial behaviors and can be useful as a program participant handout. A "paper and pencil" version is available for downloading and printing at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/money/assessment-tools/personal-health-and-finance-quiz.pdf>.
- ✓ **Read Health and Personal Finance Research** - Understanding the implications of research studies can increase your knowledge and confidence to integrate health and personal finance topics. A list of published articles using data collected from the Personal Health and Finance Quiz can be found in the "Research" section of the SSHW public website (<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>).
- ✓ **Use SSHW Posters** - Four colorful posters that illustrate relationships between health and personal finances (e.g., the high cost of smoking, junk food, and eating out) can be downloaded from the "Posters" section of the SSHW public website (<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>).
- ✓ **Sponsor a SSHW Challenge** - Practitioners can organize a challenge in their practice setting (e.g., at a military installation or within a county) and provide prizes as an incentive for participation. A form for participants to track ten daily health and financial practices on a weekly basis is available at <https://www.slideshare.net/BarbaraONeill/sshw-challenge-tracking-formnew-logo>.
- ✓ **Take the SSHW Training Course** - A 140-slide Power Point presentation for a comprehensive training that includes research summaries, resource materials, and an overview of the 25 SSHW behavior change strategies is available at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/internal/docs/small-steps-to-health-and-wealth-training-u-mo.pdf>.
- ✓ **Sponsor a Workplace Wellness Program** - Many employers are interested in both the physical and financial health of their employees from a "bottom line" perspective. Worksite newsletters for each SSHW behavior change strategy are available at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>.
- ✓ **Send Motivational Messages** - Hundreds of motivational messages from past SSHW challenges are archived online at <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>. These messages can be sent to learners via e-mail or texting or tweaked for social media use as tweets.
- ✓ **Share a Video** - The SSHW website (<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>) includes a series of videos about SSHW behavior change strategies that were recorded by the University of Arkansas. It also includes a series of nine short animated videos that work well for presentations and online links.
- ✓ **Use Interactive Learning Activities** - Several activities are available on the SSHW internal website (<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/internal/>) including a SSHW Bingo game, Coat of Arms activity, PowerPoint Jeopardy! style game, pre- and post-test, and wellness wheel activity.

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The Health Risks of Too Much Sitting

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Most adults in America are sitting about eight hours each day. We sit at work, we sit in the car, bus or train, we sit while reading, in front of the television and on the computer and we sit while visiting with friends and family, especially around meals. Important science-based research indicates that sitting too much is related to serious health problems even when you go to the gym or walk every day.

All that sitting causes your body to work against gravity, affecting your large muscle groups in your legs, arms, and back. This in turn means these muscle groups need less fuel. You burn fewer calories and your blood sugar (known as glucose) and blood fats (known as triglycerides) rise. This can lead to health problems!



The good news is there are ways to increase your activity even when you have to sit all day at work or school. Here are some tips to help you to “Get Moving, Get Healthy”:

- **Break up sitting for long periods** of time with small active movements by tapping your toes, fidgeting in your seat or leg raises or lower leg lifts.
- **Tighten your stomach** for a minute and then follow up with tightening other muscles in your legs, buttocks or arms.
- **Stand** when you are on the phone.
- **Stand up every 15-20 minutes** and do some simple stretches or march in place.
- **Try some knee-bends** or desk push-ups.
- **Take a walk** to the copy machine or down the hall. Walk each day at lunch for 30 minutes and you will see a difference in how you feel—more vibrant and less sleepy!
- **Instead of sending a text or e-mail**, get-up and go to your co-worker’s desk and talk to them instead.
- **Try a stability ball** to sit on instead of a typical desk chair.
- **Consider a treadmill desk** or stationery bike in your office. Rethink your chair and, if you are the boss, try “walking meetings” either outdoors or indoors depending on your work location.
- **Make sure you walk daily** and try for 10,000 steps each day. Invite friends or co-workers to walk with you at work. Skip the elevator and take the stairs.



Make sure you do not sit too long each day. All adults need to get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. Take “small steps” to keep active and the results will pay off in better overall health as you age.

Ten Tools and Techniques to Help Clients Improve Their Health and Personal Finances - continued from page 6

AFCPE members are encouraged to use SSHW program materials to stimulate discussions of health and personal finance behavior relationships. A good way to start conversations with clients about personal health habits in a non-threatening way is to turn questions into statements such as “Tell me what you do to take care of your health.” The answer could hold clues to clients’ level of conscientiousness that can inform the content and duration of interventions to change behavior.



Using Mindfulness: **Be at Peace with Your Food** - continued from page 2

- Next time you are serving dinner, use a smaller plate. You will be less tempted to over-eat.
- Fill half of your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables. The remaining space can be filled with a hearty handful of whole grains and proteins.
- And remember, you don't have to clean your plate if you already feel full midway through your meal.



Mindful eating involves rethinking how you eat by eating with intention and attention. It is a valuable approach to help you tune into hunger and taste satisfaction, make meals more enjoyable, and improve the quality of what and how you eat. For more information on mindful eating, visit www.thecenterformindfuleating.org/ and www.mb-eat.com. For additional information on nutrition, health, and wellness programs, visit the FCHS website <https://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/fchs>.

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Supplements: **Helpful or All Hype?** - continued from page 5



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