

5 ways to fool your stomach

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Foodwatch SmartTips 

1. Sit down to eat or snack

Sitting down – even for a piece of fruit – makes your stomach think this is a proper meal or snack and it connects with your brain in order to say “I’m full” or “Slow down”.

2. Drink water before a meal

Water distends the stomach, reduces sensations of hunger and leaves you feeling fuller. A recent US study* which tested the drink-water-before-your-meal idea on 24 overweight people discovered that the subjects ate 13 per cent less after two glasses of water before their meal.

Pre-meal water is simple and inexpensive. Perhaps it’s the real reason those detox diets work – the water you drink is aimed to ‘flush out the toxins’ but it inadvertently fills you up so you cut back on food too!

* Reference: Davy BM et al. Water consumption reduces energy intake at a breakfast meal in obese older adults. JADA 2008; 108: 1236-1239.

3. Eat slowly

Consciously slowing your rate of eating down decreases your food intake by 10 percent and maximizes your meal satisfaction. It takes your stomach 15 to 20 minutes to send a signal to your brain that it’s full, so rushing down food means you can often overeat before you’ve even realised you’ve already had enough. It also aids digestion and de-stresses you. It’s simple. Here’s how to practice it:

- Eat with a fork and knife, not your fingers. Pay attention to the food in front of you.
- Take small bites and chew well.
- Put the fork and knife down between each bite. Have a pause halfway through your meal.
- Don't eat in front of TV. It becomes "mindless eating" and distracts you from feeling full.

4. Eat alone

People who dine with others tend to overeat often by up to 60 per cent more. You tend to get caught up in the conversation and take your eating cues from others – if they eat up big, you will too. This also applies to women who eat with their male partners. The women often end up consuming similar man-sized portions and putting on weight.

5. Eat lots of fibre

High-fibre foods like grainy breads, bran cereals, salads, lentils, beans and fresh fruit take time to chew and digest. They fill you up BEFORE you’ve overeaten so you feel nice and satisfied without overdoing the kilojoules. Best of all, fibre actually blocks the absorption of a percentage of the food in your digestive system so you eat well but don’t end up with all the kilojoules.

Catherine Saxelby is an accredited nutritionist and author of Nutrition for Life.

You'll find more of her healthy eating advice for busy people at www.foodwatch.com.au

Download Catherine's Hunger-fullness log and track your hunger feelings.

