



Change Your Snack Habit in 3 Steps

If you spend a lot of your time in easy reach of a pantry, fridge or freezer, you might be familiar with perpetual snacking. These days, with so many working from home, you are not alone. Many of us are finding that round-the-clock eating gets in the way of good mood, steady energy and optimal health goals.

Tackle the issue in three basic steps, done with a lot of self-compassion and as much flexibility as you need to avoid added stress. The first step is to figure out why you are snacking, the next is to devise a plan to stop and the last is fine-tuning your approach to make it work without feeling deprived or anxious.

1 Detective Work

Start by getting curious about your habit. Problem snacking tends to be done mindlessly.

When you get up and head for the kitchen for a snack, take a moment to ask why. Is it a sense of boredom or loneliness? Are you thirsty? (Hunger can be an underlying symptom of thirst.) Do your back and neck hurt from working in a makeshift workspace? Are you mostly looking for a stretch? Are you snacking to avoid or diffuse strong emotions? Are you looking for a way to calm yourself?

2 Make a Plan

Your plan should acknowledge your snacking insights. If you suspect that you might be thirsty instead of hungry, you can drink a glass of water and wait 10 to 15 minutes before eating to see if you still want a snack. If a backache sends you to the kitchen, plan to stretch or take a quick walk around the block.

If snacking is a response to feeling down or disconnected, find ways to reach out and make connections to folks instead. If you're bored, take a creativity break. It can be a formal art practice or doing some quick drawing, singing or dancing. Steps to self soothe if anxiety or uncertainty come up might include a cup of herbal tea or another sensory experience like smelling some essential oils.

3 Refining Your Plan

The last step is to circle back in few days or a week to look at your goals. Does your plan match your temperament and lifestyle? Assess and revise, using your observations to change or refine the plan to suit your needs.

If you find that there are moments when only a snack will do, fair enough. Try to do it mindfully. Bring your full attention to whatever you are consciously choosing to eat and derive enjoyment from it, even if it feels like an indulgence.

The Institute for Health & Healing is an integrative medicine group that offers a personalized approach to your care. In our network of Bay Area and Sacramento clinics, we provide evidence-based medicine that blends contemporary Western medicine with holistic care, going beyond symptom treatment to serve the whole person.

Providers on our teams – from physicians to psychotherapists to manual therapists and Chinese medicine practitioners – incorporate mind-body medicine techniques as part of our comprehensive integrative care.

To learn more about the Institute for Health & Healing or request an appointment, visit myhealthandhealing.org.