



Over eating?

Do you find yourself sitting down with friends and ending up eating more than your fair share? Do you promise yourself you won't eat any more after polishing off a huge plate of dinner out, only to find yourself ordering the huge sundae dessert? **NALISHA PATEL** gets down to the nitty gritty.

We all tend to overeat sometimes. If you are finding that you are sabotaging your efforts to lose weight by continually eating more than you should, then don't despair. Here are six of the most common reasons why you may be overeating and what you can do about avoiding it.

Environmental cues

By having "junk food" in the house or in your environment, you are making it more available for you to consume. This can

set you up for a pattern of overeating. Some people eat more at certain times of the day, such when they walk in the door after work. We then create a habit of eating at certain times and in certain environments and overeating unhealthy foods as a consequence.

Action step: Eliminate any tempting foods from the house or workplace, or have them out of sight. Our so called "tempting foods" are usually foods that are nutritionally empty and unfulfilling. When was the last time you were tempted by a head of broccoli?

Keep healthy and nutritious snacks in reaching distance, such

as fruit, cut up vegetables and homemade dips or tubs of yoghurt. Think each and every time you are tempted to buy unhealthy foods: "Is this choice going to bring me closer or further away from my goals?"

Plan to have healthy foods in your environment for when the mood strikes.

2 **Not eating enough during the day**

If we are running on empty, then anything is going to look appetizing. Tune into your body to really be able to tell if you are hungry. If you are fearful of gaining weight, you may eat less early in the day as a strategy to lose weight or skip breakfast, only to end up overeating later on in the day. You are bound to feel ravenous by mid morning and grab anything available if you do this.

If you eat nutritionally empty foods such as "junk food", this can bypass our satiation mechanisms, which tells us when we are full. So this makes it very easy to overeat!

Action step: Plan, plan, plan! Never get caught out without decent food on hand. Always plan which snacks you intend to pack for the day, that are healthy and filling.

Start eating breakfast. This will set you up all morning and take you through to mid morning snack time.

Eat meals that are filling and that contain some good quality protein. This will make you feel full for longer and avoid overeating.

3 **Portion sizes**

Most people consume more food when they are presented with larger portion sizes. If it's there, they eat it.

Action step: Repackage snacks or food into portion sizes and stick to that portion only. Avoid eating directly from the bought package.

Fill up on smart choices so that a smaller or larger portion will leave you feeling satisfied, yet is good for your body. Try having water-based snacks such as soup, fruits and vegetables to help you feel full faster.

4 **Eating mindlessly**

When we are unaware of the food and quantities we are eating, this can set us up to overeat. It can become a bad habit to eat whilst reading or watching television.

We may feel that we are hungry when in fact we are not. We may be eating to keep our hands occupied while we watch

television or talking.

Action step: Eat mindfully at each meal. Avoid eating while doing another activity such as reading or even talking. You'll find that you will feel fuller and more satisfied from your meals and will end up consuming less food.

5 **Emotional eating**

Emotions such as boredom or anger can lead to overeating.

We may use food as a substitute for dealing with our emotions and as a recreational activity.

Action step: Allow the emotion to subside before eating if you must. Keep asking yourself if you are truly hungry. Are you feeling bored, angry, restless or frustrated? Then use a non food activity to help you alleviate it. Try going for a walk or reading. Avoid using food as a distraction.

6 **"Just this once" foods**

We may use food as a treat or reward for ourselves. If we were to eat chocolate and assume that we will eat it this one time only, we will binge because we really think we will never eat it again!

If we believe that we will just do it just one more time and that's it, we are fooling ourselves into a false sense of security that we can get away with overeating.

Action step: We need to be asking ourselves each and every time: "Does what I am doing bring me closer to my goal or take me further away from it? Will I feel good about myself after consuming this food?"

Choose to make healthier choices that support your ultimate goal. Choose to eat in moderation, rather than eliminating so called "bad" foods.

Realise that it is normal to overeat on occasion. The body can adapt to this without any major damage. If you tend to overeat close to your period, once a month, this will not have major detrimental effects.

If you find that you are overeating on a regular basis, then you need to look at whether there is a pattern. Is there a need not being met and you are possibly using food to compensate. Each of us can learn to stop overeating and eat for optimal wellbeing.

▲ Nalisha Patel of HealthMastery offers mobile 12 week challenges, personal training and personalised programmes in your home. www.healthmastery.co.nz