



# The Wellness News

Tips and resources for living well

December 2019

## Portion Control



## What is a serving Size?

According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, serving size and portion size are not the same thing. Knowing the difference is an important step to being able to eat healthily. Serving size is a standardized amount of food that may be used to quantify recommended amounts or represent quantities that people typically consume on a Nutrition Facts label. Portion size is the amount of a food you choose to eat and can be more or less than a serving.

It is important to read the food labels to determine all the nutrition facts about what you eat. The label will tell you what a serving size is and how many calories are in a serving as well as what nutrients are contained in a serving. This is especially important should you have certain health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, or kidney disease. For example, if you are diabetic, you need to watch your total sugar or carbohydrate intake. If you have high blood pressure or kidney disease, you need to watch your total sodium intake as well as other nutrients.

There are some helpful ways to estimate your portion sizes to get as close to a serving as you can without actually having to measure. For example, picture a deck of cards or the palm of your hand. This is a good estimate for a serving of meat. The size of a tennis ball is approximately the size of half a cup which is a one-ounce equivalent for pasta, rice and other grains.

For more information on portion size, visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and the USDA at [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).

## THE POWER OF MEDITATION



Worry, anxiety and stress can be more than distractions. Continually replaying in your mind daily problems and fears can affect your mental and physical health. "Meditation provides a way of quieting that chatter," says James N. Dillard, M.D., D.C., C.Ac., assistant clinical professor at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, and author of "The Chronic Pain Solution." "By bringing your focus to your breath, a mantra or a sound, you give your mind something simple to hold on to as you gradually let go of the world."

By controlling your attention as you meditate, you begin to feel more relaxed and at peace. And this peacefulness usually lasts far beyond the meditation itself, so that when stress appears hours later, you have the psychic resources to deflect it. Meditation allows you to become more awake and more deliberate about your actions, says the Arthritis Foundation. It teaches you how to respond rather than react to situations in your life.

Although meditation sounds simple, it takes discipline to remain still in body and mind, blocking out the world around you and quieting your thoughts, the AF says. You also need to practice at least 20 minutes a day to get the most out of your meditation.

There are a number of theories about how meditation may improve physical and mental health. One hypothesis is that it reduces activity of the sympathetic nervous system, leading to a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure, slower breathing and muscle relaxation.

Various types of meditation use different techniques. Popular forms of meditation include:

- Mindfulness, which involves focusing on a physical sensation such as the breath. When thoughts intrude, you return your focus to your breathing.
- Relaxation response, which involves progressively relaxing your body and then focusing on a word or sound.
- Visualization, which involves focusing on specific places or situations.

"It's important to remember there's no 'right' way to meditate," says Randy Flora, a mind-body fitness instructor at Canyon Ranch in Tucson, Ariz. "If you get frustrated with one method, or it's just not working for you, try another technique until you find one that's helpful."

Popular meditation techniques are described below. For best results, try to meditate every day for 20 to 30 minutes.

## Mindfulness meditation

In mindfulness meditation, you focus on an awareness of the present moment, the AF says. You start with a single focal point, such as your breath, and then expand to include thoughts, emotions and sensations. Here are some tips to keep in mind when you meditate.



- Find a quiet place. Sit in a chair or on the floor.
- Become aware of your breathing, focusing on the sensation of air moving in and out of your body as you breathe. Feel your belly rise and fall and the air enter your nostrils and leave your mouth.
- Watch every thought come and go. When thoughts come up, don't suppress them, but simply note them and return to your breathing.
- As the time comes to a close, sit for a minute or two, becoming aware of where you are. Get up gradually.

## Relaxation response

- Sit quietly in a comfortable position or lie down on the floor and close your eyes.
- Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. To do so, start with your toes and consciously relax them. Then relax your feet, ankles, calves, knees and so on until you reach your face. Keep everything relaxed as you go.
- Then choose a word or phrase that makes you feel peaceful.
- As you breathe in, slowly say the sound or word to yourself. Breathe slowly and naturally. Inhale through your nose and pause for a few seconds. Exhale through your mouth, again pausing for a few seconds.
- As the time comes to a close, become aware of where you are, open your eyes and get up slowly.

## Moving meditation

Fitting an additional 20 to 30 minutes of meditation into your already busy day may be difficult. An alternative is to try a form of exercise that combines fitness with meditation. Yoga, for instance, focuses on breathing, movement and posture to help you relax and control stress. Tai chi is a form of meditation that combines slow, gentle movements and deep breathing. Some people do a walking meditation; with this method, you slow down your walk so that you can focus on your steps and the movement of your legs and feet.

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## CURB EMOTIONAL EATING



Like many people, you may seek occasional solace in a bowl of ice cream or slice of pizza after a bad day. When you find yourself seeking out food to comfort you, you are eating in response to your emotions, rather than to hunger.

Occasional emotional eating isn't a problem for most people. After all, that's what makes comfort food so appealing. But turning to food every time you have unpleasant feelings - or even positive ones - can

lead to weight gain, says the American Dietetic Association (ADA). Being overweight can increase your risk for obesity-related health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease. And it can take a toll on your self-esteem and emotional health.

### Understand your cravings

The first step in dealing with emotional eating is to learn to recognize the difference between emotional and physical hunger, the ADA says. Here are some clues that can help you identify emotional eating:

- Sudden hunger
- Craving one specific type of food, such as pizza, because no other food will satisfy your hunger
- Difficulty stopping eating once you are full
- Feeling guilty after eating
- Eating to reward or nurture yourself

### What you can do?

Once you learn to identify emotional eating, it helps to keep track of those things that trigger you to eat when you are not hungry, the ADA says. Many people often eat in response to feeling sad, anxious, depressed or lonely. Come up with substitutions for emotional eating. For example, take a walk, call a friend, engage in a hobby, or do anything else that can distract you from wanting to eat. It also helps to replace unhealthy comfort foods with healthy ones and practice portion control. You don't need to completely give up foods that comfort you, just eat less of them.

### If you need extra help

If you've been an emotional eater for a long time, you may find it difficult to stop on your own. In particular, if you are depressed or have low self-esteem, it may be helpful to talk with a therapist or a dietitian who works with eating disorders, the ADA says. Finding a support group for people dealing with similar issues can provide needed guidance for dealing with emotional eating. Talking with your health care provider about your concerns is a good place to start.

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## WHAT TO DO WHEN THE FAMILY FEELS CLAUSTROPHOBIC



There comes a time when even the closest families find themselves too close together. Suddenly, the house seems smaller; the kids are whiny, fighting with each other or acting up in other ways. Worse, you are ready to burst and it becomes clear that your usually peaceful, friendly household is full of people who wish they were anywhere but there -- including yourself.

It's time to get up and get out, advises Martin Goldberg, M.D., a psychiatrist and director of the Penn Council for Relationships. "People pay too little attention to the need to be outside, to be active," he says.

- Go for a walk. "It's a good way to be out and active and meeting other people," Dr. Goldberg says. (If the weather is inclement, do your walking at the local mall.)
- Plan mini-vacations, like a weekend or day trip. To break up a routine that's become monotonous, Dr. Goldberg says, you need new things to look forward to.
- Invite company over. "It shakes up the cast of characters, and children are always better behaved around company," he says.
- Create separate space: Mom's night out. Dad's afternoon out. An outing with friends for the kids.

When the walls start closing in and the whining starts, "discipline" can be simply showing your children something new to do, says Maurie D. Pressman, M.D., founder of the Pressman Center for Mind/Body Wellness in Philadelphia.

"There was a time when we told stories, when we used to make things, instead of just sitting in front of the television," says Dr. Pressman. Rein in your children with engaging, imaginative pursuits like arts and crafts, puzzle solving, thought-provoking games or helping you to cook, he says.

"Kids are a great joy," Dr. Pressman says, "but they are very demanding. They need a loving environment, but they also need discipline."

If your children are younger, a "time out" often works to restore calm, says Robert R. Prentice, M.D., a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Time outs should be in a boring place with no distractions, and the child should be told ahead of time how long the time out will be. These are especially effective if you have more than one child and they won't stop fighting, Dr. Prentice says. You can separate them and put them each in time out.

*source: The StayWell Company, LLC ©2018*

## Making Holiday Family Conversations Merrier



The annual Stress in America survey consistently reports strain among families caused by their ideological differences, and the holidays have a keen

reputation for these conflicts, even at the dinner table. Try the following tips to help make your get-togethers a little merrier: 1) steer conversations that appear to be drifting into conflict toward those things you can agree on; 2) if you are angry about what's in the news, avoid displacing this tension onto loved ones; 3) challenge yourself to be a tension de-escalator, not an aggravator; and 4) rehearse how you might respond to conflict because doing so will dramatically improve your ability to act calmly while avoiding hair-trigger reflexes. Source: [apa.org](http://apa.org) [search "stress-conversations"]

## Moving Beyond "Just Coping"



We are all different psychologically, so an event that creates acute stress for one person may not affect another. Don't be fooled into thinking that

your crisis requires toughening up or "pressing on" like you imagine others might. Stigma against asking for help can lead to needless suffering. Fact: Getting help earlier shortens the period of distress and solves problems faster, and most counseling is not long term. One or two sessions may be all it takes to resolve the problem you face.

## Use the EAP for Acute Stress



EAPs do more than help employees solve problems. They also possess serious listening and empathy skills, and emotional support that offer relief from the anguish you may be feeling,

caused by a life crisis, difficult time, or even grim personal circumstances. Don't dismiss asking the EAP for help, even if you believe "the EAP can do nothing to help me in this situation." Don't live in fear, lose sleep, feel physically ill, or experience a constant sense of foreboding doom by "going it alone." Instead, partner with the EAP for support that can help you through a difficult period.

## December is 3D Month



December is Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Awareness Month. Drinking and driving don't mix, but the public's perception of marijuana as a safety hazard is not as universally

accepted. After using marijuana, risk of a motor vehicle crash increases. Using both alcohol and marijuana risks an even higher likelihood of a crash. Perhaps no state tracks this correlation more closely than Colorado. Its sixth annual report on the impact of marijuana legalization includes death-related car crashes where the driver tested positive for marijuana. The trend has been up, and today, 23%-25% of fatal car crashes statewide now involve a marijuana-positive driver. In 2009, this figure was 10%. Source: [RMHIDTA.org](http://RMHIDTA.org)

## Master Your Self-Care Strategy



Self-care is not just about getting enough sleep, eating well, or taking time off for a massage. Rather, it is a conscious process of being attentive to your physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, but with a goal in

mind—to build resilience that allows you to be more capable of bouncing back from adversity and managing stress better. To practice this strategic form of wellness, focus your attention on: 1) physical fitness and emotional wellness (how you manage thoughts, feelings, and beliefs so you engage in positive thinking); 2) being aware of your emotions and the emotions of others with whom you interact, and use this awareness to make better decisions and communicate more effectively; 3) knowing how to create positive emotions. Does walking outside for 15 minutes improve your mood? Does taking five minutes to tidy up your office lift your spirits? When you arrive home after work, does sitting down to play the piano inspire you? Know your “go to” natural, healthy, and positive mood enhancers and use them routinely; 4) having someone with whom you can confide in and process challenges. Your EAP can be a source for this support; 5) eating right and getting enough sleep; and 6) having constructive ways of dealing with emotional stress—a hobby, spiritual practices, networking, leisure activities. Examining this list, do you see opportunities to improve upon your self-care strategy?

## Helping to Prevent Suicide



Experts in suicide prevention will tell you that “a suicidal person doesn’t ‘want’ to commit suicide—they just want the pain to stop.” It has also been observed that

when a suicidal person makes a decision to act, their perception of pain may disappear. They become calm. Their decision provides relief because the suicidal person has found “a solution” to their problem. Family and friends can fulfill a powerful intervention role if they witness this change of mood or frame of mind, and they should inquire about self-harm if this change happens alongside severe personal problems, victimization, or serious illness. If asked, most people considering suicide will not hide it from you—they’ll talk about it. And that’s exactly what you want. For guidance, turn to the EAP, or in an emergency, call 911 or 1-800-SUICIDE.

## Maintaining High Energy at Work



What can keep you feeling energetic at work? There’s more to it than avoiding potatoes at lunch or sugary snacks that result in an energy crash. Discover a personal plan for staying perky at work. Take a week

to record on a three-by-five card four observations: 1) what time(s) of day you feel most energetic and engaged; 2) what time(s) of day you feel the least energetic and engaged; 3) what you did just prior to these periods; and 4) what behaviors or influences appear to have affected these energy states. To complete your plan, conduct an online search of “ways to improve energy at work.” You’ll discover everything from munching on pumpkin seeds to going to bed by a certain time. Now, compare all these “energy tools” to see which ones fit best with your rhythm or cycle. Experiment and fine-tune your personal energy plan. Later, consider whether you have experienced an increase in overall job satisfaction as a result. You may be pleasantly surprised.

## Overcoming Money Fears



Worrying about money is common, but if you feel overwhelmed, tackling this fear is a priority. Most money fears—financing a child’s college

education, retirement, paying taxes, late bills—lack a commitment to a definite plan, budget, and host of tools, advice, and interventions that can turn your life around. This plan should energize you, cause a renewed sense of control, and give you the ability to track progress toward your goals. Feeling empowered by these proactive steps is what returns the peace of mind you’ve been missing, and it also gives you a better night’s sleep. The path begins with a first step. Visit your

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We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, & legal issues.

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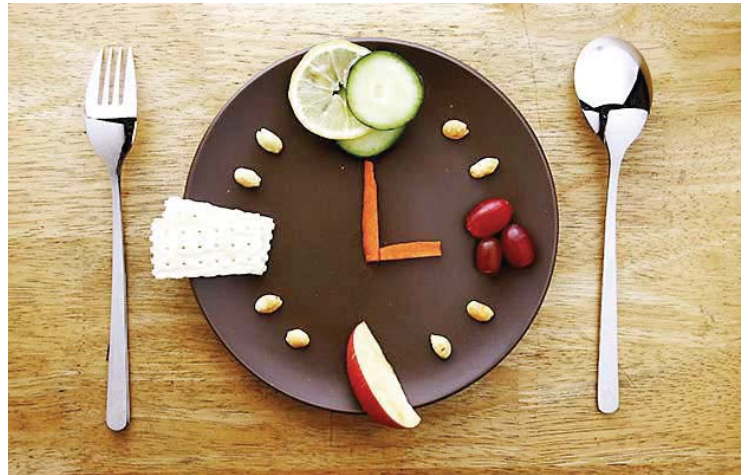
# Skipping Meals

## Friend or Foe?

Why would anyone want to skip meals? Some people do so in order to lose weight.

It's important to understand what happens to the body when skipping meals. It can cause:

- Low blood sugar
- Reduction in energy
- Increased risk of bingeing
- Increased risk of diabetes
- Impaired concentration



Additionally, research from Columbia University suggests that skipping meals regularly can have immediate health consequences including fatigue, dizziness, and fainting. In the long term it may cause bone loss, impaired thyroid function, decreased immunity, and worsening dental health.

It is likely that you or someone you know is practicing Intermittent fasting. There are many forms of intermittent fasting, but in general it means that you can eat pretty much whatever you want, but *only* during a specific time period. There is research that shows that intermittent fasting works for weight loss. However, other research that shows that it is no different than daily calorie restriction. So, if you don't feel intermittent fasting is right for you, restricting your calories works just as well.

Before deciding to consistently skip meals, it is important that you discuss this with your primary care physician. Here are some tips to avoid it:

- Plan meals in advance and meal prep ahead as much as possible
- Try small and more frequent meals rather than three large meals
- Always have healthy snacks high in protein and fiber for staying power
- Set an alarm to avoid working through meal breaks

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We know it is not always easy to juggle everything & realize simple tips can help provide a different approach. Your EAP is here to help with family, work, health, well-being & legal issues.

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# Gingerbread Pancakes

## Ingredients



- 1½ cups of white whole-wheat flour
- 2 teaspoons of baking powder
- 1¼ teaspoons of pumpkin pie spice
- 1 teaspoon of ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon of baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon of salt
- 1 large egg
- 1½ cups of buttermilk
- ½ cup of unsweetened applesauce
- 2 tablespoons of canola oil
- 2 tablespoons of molasses
- 1 tablespoon of sugar
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract

## Directions

1. Whisk flour, baking powder, pumpkin pie spice, ginger, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. Whisk egg, buttermilk, applesauce, oil, molasses, sugar, and vanilla in a medium bowl. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients, add the wet ingredients and whisk just until combined. Resist overmixing—it will make the pancakes tough.
2. Let the batter sit, without stirring, for 10 to 15 minutes. As the batter rests, the baking powder forms bubbles that create fluffy pancakes and the gluten in the flour relaxes to make them more tender.
3. Coat a large nonstick skillet or griddle with cooking spray; heat over medium heat. Without stirring the batter, measure out pancakes using about ¼ cup batter per pancake and pour into the pan (or onto the griddle). Cook until the edges are dry and you see bubbles on the surface, 2 to 4 minutes. Flip and cook until golden brown on the other side, 2 to 4 minutes more. Repeat with the remaining batter, coating the pan with cooking spray and reducing the heat as needed.

## Health Tip: *Avoid Mindless Eating*

- **Before eating**, think about whether you are even hungry.
- **Drink water** – thirst can mask itself as hunger.
- **Focus** on something else like going for a walk or calling a friend.

**Action:** *Be prepared* with healthy low-calorie snacks if you are hungry between meals.

## Preventing a Holiday Food Coma

### Have you ever experienced that sleepy feeling after eating a large holiday meal?

You may have experienced a food coma. The technical name is postprandial somnolence. This is a normal state of drowsiness following a meal, and it has two components: a general state of low energy related to activation of the parasympathetic nervous system in response to mass in the gastrointestinal tract and a specific state of sleepiness.



### Causes:

One thought is that high levels of tryptophan in some foods like turkey and dairy products can boost serotonin levels in your body, which helps you relax. Both tryptophan and serotonin are important in the production of melatonin, which helps the body prepare for sleep.

Some researchers feel that meals high in fat and low in carbohydrates can cause sleepiness after a meal. They attribute this to the release of a hormone that suppresses hunger and decreases arousal, causing sleepiness.

### Prevention:

Regardless of what you think the cause may be, how can you prevent it? Here are some tips to prevent a food coma:

- Avoid large meals – eat smaller meals and include liquids like soup or a drink
- Get enough sleep – if you do eat a larger meal be sure to be well rested
- Balance macronutrients - include a balance of carbohydrates, fats and proteins to avoid a fat-heavy meal
- Be active after your meal – go for a walk after dinner to increase your energy, burn some calories, and avoid sitting down and falling asleep on the couch.