

Eating Styles: The Unskilled Eater

In our fast-paced society, with enlarged portion sizes of food, it becomes easy to be described as an *unskilled eater*. An *unskilled eater* is described as someone who may eat too fast, or nibble while cooking and cleaning up, or take second helpings of food or clean their plate despite feeling full. The goal of this handout is to help provide solutions and techniques to help you improve your eating skills.

1. Eating too fast. Who hasn't had those times when you had to hurry up and eat? The unskilled eater described here is one that chronically eats too fast.

The goal of slowing down is to enjoy the flavors of the foods you are consuming, and as you slow down, it gives time to receive the message of feeling satisfied and no longer hungry. You know it's time to stop eating. As a result, you eat less which helps with achieving weight loss.

After bariatric surgery, you will have a new way of eating called the “eating protocol.” The eating protocol consists of:

- **Taking baby size or pea-size bites.**
- **Chewing each bite 25 – 30 times until the food is liquefied.**
- **Slowing down and taking up to 30 minutes for the meal.**
- **Listening to internal signals of satiety to stop eating.**

If any one of these eating protocols is not followed after bariatric surgery, you will experience pain and intolerance during the eating episode which could lead to vomiting.

Tips for Success to help you slow down pre-surgery:

- Put your fork or spoon down between bites.
- Divide or cut your food into small bites. Eat only one bite at a time.
- Begin to chew your food more before swallowing.
- Watch the clock or set a timer to learn to slow your eating down.

*When you are trying to eat less to lose weight, this skill can be very helpful!

2. Nibbling while cooking and/or cleaning up. Do you find yourself really hungry while you're cooking and nibble on available foods in the kitchen or on what is being prepared? Is it hard to stop eating, because the food tastes so good and there are only a few bites left? The following are skills that can help you control these nibbling episodes that can lead to consuming several extra calories.

Tips for Success:

- Don't eat while standing. Sit down at the table, enjoy your food. Sitting and focusing will make you more aware of what you are eating.

- Chew sugarless gum while cooking, cleaning up or when tempted to eat inappropriately. It's hard to eat and chew gum at the same time.
- Scrape leftovers directly into the trash or store in opaque containers which are out of site. If possible, have someone else put the leftovers away. Leaving food out on the countertops increases the odds of nibbling.
- Incorporate a planned snack 2 – 2 1/2 hours before the meal to avoid being overly hungry at the meal or during meal preparation.

3. Taking second helpings or taking too large of portions. You want to see volume on your plate, which makes it easy to serve up too much food. You're hungry, the food **tastes** good. The serving dish is set right in front of you resulting in extras being put on the plate. Help!

Tips for Success:

- Use smaller plates, bowls and glasses. Less food looks like a lot of food on a 9" plate.
- Avoid eating out of bags or containers. You lose track of how much food has been consumed.
- Measure or weigh out standard serving sizes, such as 3 oz. of cooked meat/fish/poultry or ½ cup cooked vegetables or 1 cup milk. You may be surprised at what this looks like.
- Be sure the amount of food served is not too little. Unrealistic, small portions set you up for taking second helpings.
- When eating a meal, remove serving dishes from the table during the meal. You have to get up and get the second helping versus dishing out extra helpings easily from the table, without too much thought.
- Return bags or containers to their proper place after fixing a plate of food. Food that is put away is less likely to be eaten.

4. Cleaning your plate. Resign from the "Clean Plate club.

Tips for Success:

- Learn to leave a bite or two of food on your plate. This skill is difficult but can be very helpful, esp. after surgery when taking one extra bite can lead to pain and food intolerance.
- This skill is helpful when you are served large portions of food, such as at parties or restaurants.

5. Eating In Inappropriate Places. Inappropriate places can be described as in front of the TV, computer or driving in the car. When you are focused on these activities, are you able to enjoy your food, slow down and be aware of the signal of satiety?

If you have a history of eating in inappropriate places, such as in front of the TV, simply watching TV can trigger you to want to eat.

Tips for Success:

- Choose a place at home where meals and snacks will be enjoyed such as the dining room table, kitchen table or breakfast bar.
- Turn off the TV and enjoy your meal with your family.
- Turn off the TV and enjoy soft music while you eat.
- Try setting a table with nice dishes and tablecloth. Add some ambiance with candles or flowers. Make your meal time pleasant.

List your most troublesome eating styles and then list the skills that you will use to improve your current eating style.

Current Unskilled Eating Style	New Eating Skills