



MINDFUL EATING

A GUIDE TO CREATING A HEALTHY + ENJOYABLE
RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

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DISCLAIMER

This e-book provides general educational information and does not replace personalised medical, nutritional or psychological advice.

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WELCOME

Food is more than fuel. It’s memory, comfort, culture, and care. Yet in the rush of everyday life, eating can become hurried, disconnected, or tinged with judgment. This guide invites a gentler way to slow down, listen inward, and rebuild a relationship with food that feels nourishing, joyful, and calm.

Mindful eating is not another set of rules. It’s a practice of presence, meeting each meal with curiosity, kindness, and attention to the body’s cues. Blending evidence-based nutrition and behavioural science with Ayurveda’s timeless wisdom on digestion (Agni), daily rhythms, and sensory awareness, this book offers simple, practical tools to help eating feel easier and more satisfying.

What to expect:

- Short reflections and prompts to help notice hunger, fullness, and emotions
- Gentle strategies for navigating stress, cravings, and distractions
- Everyday practices before, during, and after meals to bring more ease to eating



- An emphasis on progress over perfection: small steps, repeated often

Terminology

Agni - the body and mind's digestive capacity
Pitta dosha - metabolic activity responsible for processing all incoming information
Prana - life force

WHAT IS MINDFUL EATING?

Mindful eating is about being fully present in the experience of eating, using all our senses to enjoy food while noticing thoughts, emotions and physical sensations. It shifts eating from something we do on autopilot to something we do with intention, which lets us savour flavours, slow down, and connect our choices with how the body feels.

Research suggests mindful eating can:

- Support healthier food choices
- Encourage slower eating and awareness of fullness
- Reduce emotional and binge eating
- Improve digestion and comfort

Key elements include:

- Presence: paying attention to taste, aroma, texture, and satisfaction.
- Body cues: Recognising hunger and fullness signals, noticing emotions.



- Non-judgment: Noticing preferences and stepping away from “good” or “bad” labels.
- Reflection: Acknowledging origins, preparation, and after-effects of foods.

Mindful eating is not:

- A diet or a restriction plan
- Eating in silence or isolation
- About being “perfect”

In this guide, you’ll learn how to tune into your body’s signals, explore your habits around food and discover what you’re really hungry for.

WHAT ARE YOU REALLY HUNGRY FOR?

Before automatically reaching for food, pause and ask: What am I actually hungry for right now? Hunger has multiple dimensions and isn't just physical, It could be for rest, movement, fresh air, comfort, or connection. Taking a breath before eating can help reveal whether the urge comes from the body or from emotions such as stress, boredom, or loneliness. Are we eating to satisfy emotional needs, to relieve stress, for stimulation? If so, it might be an idea to go for a walk, stretch, take time out or get some change of scenery. Pay attention to your reactivity.

Mindful eating helps differentiate the types of hunger we might experience and respond skillfully.

Types of hunger to notice:

- Physical hunger: Builds slowly and increases. Like stomach emptiness, best satisfied with balanced meals eaten at a



comfortable pace

- Emotional hunger: Sudden cravings linked to stress, boredom, or reward. Often specific to comfort foods and persist even after fullness.
- Sensory/situational hunger: Triggered by sights, smells, or social events. Awareness helps us pause before acting.

Helpful questions to ask yourself:

- What sensations do I feel? Hunger in the body or an emotion?
- On a 0–10 scale, how hungry am I?
- What meal or snack would be satisfying right now?

Stress and digestion

Eating when stressed often leads to discomfort because the nervous system diverts resources away from digestion. Stress hormones can also influence gut function (making the lining leaky; affecting the muscle contractions) and the microbiome (bacterial landscape in our gut).

Sitting down and focusing on the meal doesn't make stress disappear but it can soften its impact and support digestive comfort.



Ayurvedic perspective:

A key Ayurvedic principle is to eat only when we are truly hungry, allowing our digestive capacity (Agni) time to re-establish between meals.

When stress is present, favour warm, simple foods and consider pausing with a herbal tea until calm. Adding a short break (breathing, a short walk, or journaling) can reduce emotional eating and help identify triggers, making reactions less automatic.



UNDERSTANDING HABITS + PATTERNS

We live in a world designed for distraction, from social media to working at our desks and constant notifications. It's not uncommon to see people eating in their car, in front of screens or on the go, which can disconnect us from important hunger and fullness cues.

Modern life is shaped around speed, screens, stress, and social cues, which can nudge mindless consumption. It's easy to miss satiety (fullness) signals and overeat before the brain catches up. Research shows we're more likely to overeat when distracted. But importantly, this does not refer to when we eat with others. Shared meals did not increase food intake in the same study.

Common patterns include:

- Speed eating: Eating too quickly before fullness signals catch up.

- Distracted eating: Screens or multitasking reducing awareness, leading to overeating.
- Emotional loops: Stress triggers cravings, and food offers temporary relief.
- All-or-nothing thinking: Strict food rules or diets trigger guilt and rebound eating.



Ayurvedic perspective:

Routine and environment: Eating at regular times, in a calm setting, and choosing warm, easily digestible foods support Agni and have been shown to improve glycaemic control and insulin sensitivity. As Ayurveda tells us, the body tends to thrive with rhythm, and how we prepare food matters as much as what we eat.

Attention and assimilation:

According to Ayurveda, Pitta dosha is responsible for digesting all incoming information. If we are distracted whilst eating, we weaken our capacity to metabolise and assimilate our meal - an idea that beautifully aligns with mindful eating's emphasis on presence.

Using our hands: Making contact with food signals the body to prepare for digestion. In Ayurveda, each finger and thumb corresponds to one of the five elements, and touching food is thought to help keep these elements in balance while activating Prana. So the digestive process begins even before the first bite, priming the body to absorb nutrients. Contemporary research echoes parts of this idea, noting that touch



can trigger the release of digestive enzymes.

Additionally, studies suggest that touching food can heighten sensory awareness and increase enjoyment. The tactile feel in our hands appears to shape how we experience texture and “mouthfeel” once we start eating.

Eating with the hands while seated on the floor engages more senses and may aid digestion. Sitting cross-legged (Sukhasana) can reduce back discomfort by supporting the spine's natural curve and engaging different muscle groups, and may promote circulation that supports digestive processes.

SIMPLE WAYS TO EAT MINDFULLY

Eating mindfully starts way before our meal. Even our shopping experience can be done mindfully and with more intention if we avoid going to the shop while we're hungry.

Create a calm space:

- Clear a space for eating and sit down without multi-tasking
- Minimise distractions such as phones or TV
- Offer a moment of gratitude – think about where the food came from, how it was prepared, and who prepared it.
- Serve an amount that matches your current hunger

Take notice:

- Notice the food you are eating – the smell, the colours and the texture to reduce those autopilot bites
- Take on a beginner's mind as if it's the first time you're eating this meal



Slow down

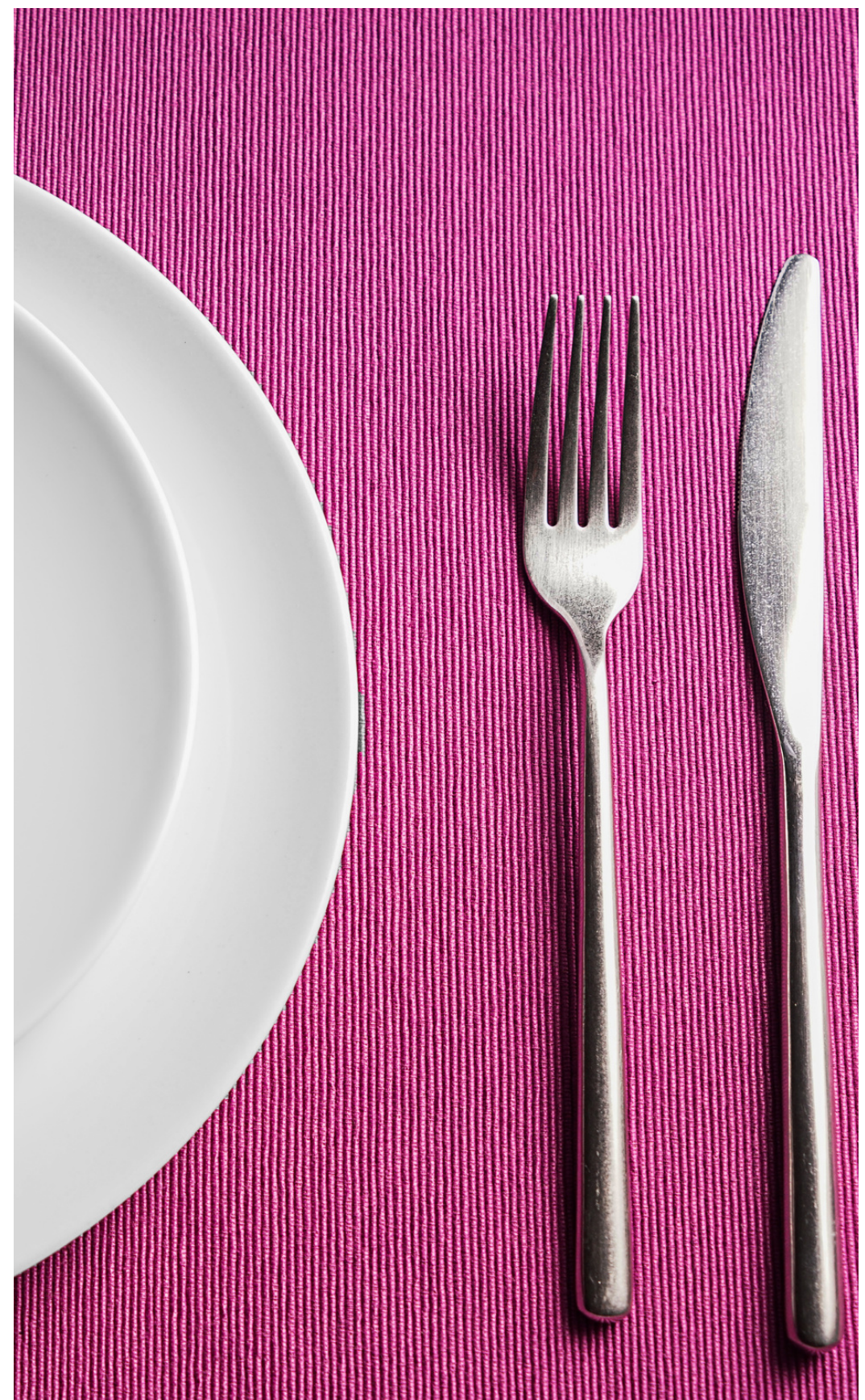
- By sitting down and taking time out to eat, we can create a break from the hustle and bustle of our day and treat our meal time like a stress-relieving activity
- Enjoy small bites and chew slowly and thoroughly
- Take a breath or two between each bite
- Put utensils down between bites
- Check: am I swallowing before the food is properly chewed?

After the meal:

- How does the body feel?
Energised, light, heavy, dull, bloated, sluggish?
- Did you enjoy the meal?
- Would you change anything next time? Don't self-criticise
- Notice your mood, energy and digestion to guide future choices

Tips to practice consistently:

- Aim for regular mealtimes to stabilise hunger
- Use a hunger–fullness scale: begin eating around 3–4, finish around 6–7
- Replace perfection with curiosity. Mindfulness is a practice



Ayurvedic perspective:

Ayurveda recommends we eat until we are around two-thirds full, allowing space for digestion to unfold.

How we feel after a meal can tell us a lot about our Agni and the suitability of the meal or timing. Ayurveda encourages us to note energy, mood, digestion, and satisfaction after meals. Use these insights to guide next time, not to judge.

SUMMARY

Mindful eating is not about rules or restrictions. It's about slowing down, reconnecting, and bringing kindness into your relationship with food.

When we eat with awareness, we not only enjoy food more but also trust our own decisions.

Most importantly, mindful eating encourages us to take care of ourselves :)



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hello, I'm Kirit – a registered nurse and Ayurvedic Health Practitioner.

I believe genuine healthcare begins long before we walk into a doctor's clinic. Empowering people with practical tools to notice imbalance and take care of themselves is at the heart of my work.

When I'm not nursing, I offer 1:1 Ayurvedic health consultations, group workshops and webinars on various health topics by blending the time-tested principles of Ayurveda with what modern science has shown us.

If you'd like to learn more about Ayurveda and how this ancient science can support us in these modern times, head over to my blog or check out some of my webinars and workshops.



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HUNGER- FULLNESS SCALE

0	Faint – Unwell from lack of food
1	Ravenous – Shaky, urgent; likely to overeat
2	Very hungry – Irritable, hard to focus; prone to fast eating
3	Hungry – Clear physical signs; best time for a balanced meal
4	Early hunger – Stomach starts to feel empty; good time to eat
5	Neutral – Even; could wait to eat or have a small snack
6	Neutral–satisfied – No hunger, light and clear
7	Comfortably full – Pleasantly satisfied; stop here if possible
8	Full – Satisfied but could tip into discomfort
9	Very full – Heavy, sluggish; would prefer to lie down
10	Overfull – Uncomfortable, pressure in stomach, low energy