# The impact of eating speed on health and weight



Recent discussions among scientists highlight that the speed at which individuals consume their meals can significantly impact their weight and overall health. Experts, including Leslie Heinberg from the Center for Behavioral Health at the Cleveland Clinic, argue that while much attention is directed towards what people eat, the rate of eating deserves equal consideration.

Heinberg notes the importance of the body's communication process concerning fullness. “It takes about 20 minutes for the stomach to communicate to the brain via a whole host of hormonal signals that it’s full,” she stated, emphasising that individuals who eat quickly may miss these signals and inadvertently consume more than necessary.

Eating rapidly can also lead to the ingestion of excess air, often resulting in bloating or indigestion. Furthermore, insufficient chewing can hinder proper digestion, potentially preventing the body from absorbing essential nutrients. Heinberg warns that unchewed food can even become lodged in the oesophagus, adding to the potential health risks associated with fast eating.

Studies have illustrated a correlation between eating speed and obesity, suggesting that those who eat quickly tend to have a higher likelihood of obesity, while those who eat more slowly are less likely to face such challenges. Heinberg pointed out that distractions, such as watching television during meals, can impair one’s ability to recognise when they are full, leading to overconsumption. “When we do things while we’re eating, we’re eating less mindfully. And that often causes us to eat more,” she explained.

To counteract these habits, she recommends various strategies, such as utilising the non-dominant hand for eating, experimenting with unfamiliar utensils like chopsticks, and intentionally pausing to drink water when meals are partially consumed.

Sarah Berry, chief scientist at the British nutritional company ZOE, echoed this sentiment, advising that individuals should strive to be more aware of the taste and texture of their food. “If we’re not fully present, it’s very easy to eat more quickly and not notice how much we’ve consumed," Berry noted.

Clinical psychologist Helen McCarthy from the British Psychological Society proposed a straightforward method for reducing eating speed: increasing the number of bites taken while chewing each mouthful for a longer duration. She also highlighted that food types play a role in eating speed; foods that are ultraprocessed and possess a softer texture are typically consumed more quickly.

McCarthy shared anecdotes from her patients, illustrating the effects of changing eating habits. One patient reported a dramatic shift in enjoyment when advised to slow down her consumption of potato chips. After taking the time to savour each chip individually, she described the experience as “like having a mouthful of claggy chemicals”, indicating a newfound awareness of the food's quality.

These insights suggest that altering eating practices, particularly the pace at which individuals consume meals, may lead to significant improvements in health and vitality. The discussion continues to evolve as experts push for a greater understanding of the relationship between eating behaviours and health outcomes.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/8/1/e019589> - This study supports the correlation between eating speed and obesity, indicating that individuals who eat more slowly are less likely to develop obesity, as opposed to fast eaters who are at a higher risk.
* <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0284998> - The article highlights a positive association between fast eating speed and overweight, suggesting that fast eaters are more likely to be overweight compared to slow or moderate-speed eaters.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8156274/> - This narrative review discusses how eating speed and frequency can impact obesity and metabolic syndrome, emphasizing the importance of mindful eating habits.
* <https://www.clevelandclinic.org/> - While not directly linked to a specific article, the Cleveland Clinic is a reputable source where experts like Leslie Heinberg might discuss topics related to eating habits and their impact on health.
* <https://www.britishpsychologicalsociety.org/> - This is a source where clinical psychologists like Helen McCarthy might discuss strategies for managing eating speed and improving health through mindful eating practices.