

## Make Peace With All Foods

Candy, cookies and cakes oh my! Most people, especially during this time of year, don't know how to handle these foods since they are usually on the "naughty" instead of "nice" list. You might want them, but you feel like you can't because they are full of unhealthy fats, sugar and oh so many calories. Classifying foods as "good" or "bad" is not a good idea. Oftentimes, as soon as you tell yourself that you can't eat something, you want it even more.

It's best to give yourself permission to eat all foods unconditionally. The feeling of deprivation and ongoing cravings you may be experiencing occur because you are telling yourself that you cannot or should not eat certain foods. When you give into that craving, the experience is so intense that it usually results in overeating and guilt. Once you give yourself permission to eat all foods, it removes that sense of urgency and excitement. A balanced eating plan that allows all foods can make it easier to manage cravings and maintain progress towards your health and nutrition goals.

To help control cravings, it is also important to eat regular meals and snacks. Start to eat when you begin to feel hungry as opposed to waiting until you are ravenous. Waiting until your hunger cues are screaming at you, can lead to overeating and making poor food choices.

A good balance of carbohydrates, fats and protein is key to keeping you most satisfied and in control of cravings. Healthy carbohydrates such as fruits, veggies and whole grains contain fiber that will help fill you up while lean proteins and healthy fats will help keep you satisfied for several hours. Build a healthy plate by filling half your plate with non-starchy vegetables (lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, carrots, peppers, mushroom and spinach) a quarter of your plate with lean protein (chicken breast, salmon, tuna, eggs, beans, lentils, tofu, cottage cheese,

Greek yogurt) and a quarter of your plate with a starchy vegetable (sweet potatoes, acorn squash, peas) or whole grain (farro, quinoa, brown rice, wheat berries). Add some healthy fat (olive oil, avocado, nuts and seeds) to complete your plate.

Most people get more than enough protein in their diet. For active people, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommends a range of 1.2-1.7 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day, or 0.5 to 0.8 grams per pound of body weight. A woman who weighs 130 pounds needs approximately 65-104 grams of protein per day. Try to spread your protein intake evenly throughout the day as the body can only use approximately 30 grams of protein at a time. Excess protein is not stored as protein, instead it will be stored as fat if it is not used for energy. Therefore, more is not better.

The best way to control your cravings is to include all foods unconditionally in moderation. Stop labeling foods as “good” or “bad”. Creating a balanced plate and eating regular meals and snacks when hunger strikes will help you make the best decisions about when and how much to eat.