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Four Factors for Fullness

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Weight loss tips for hunger management

With so much conflicting information on weight loss it can become overwhelming to know what to eat. Rather than thinking about changing everything at once (which surely leads to frustration and little success), here are “four factors for fullness” that have helped many of our clients manage satiety for their weight loss efforts.

#1 Protein

Protein found in meat, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, legumes, nuts, nut butters and dairy foods help to sustain energy and fullness. A carb heavy meal (such as simply toast and fruit for breakfast) is not likely to keep you full. This can leave you sleepy, craving sweets or savory foods soon after and set you up to eat again soon. A meal should last you 3-5 hours and if it does not, one possible reason is that protein may be lacking.



Ensuring you have enough protein doesn't mean that you should skip carbs. There is a key difference between being full and being satisfied. One simple way to think of this is that protein helps with “stomach fullness” and carbs help with “brain satisfaction.” The best, balanced meals for satiety include a mix of both carbs and protein together.

#2 Fibre

You've likely heard that fibre is good for “keeping you regular” and improving overall digestive health. Specifically for weight loss we know that fibre can sustain fullness longer than refined foods. Think about the difference in how you feel if you ate a light rice based cereal with limited fibre versus cereal that contains a substantial amount of bran. Fibre is found in foods such as bran-based cereals, whole grain breads, brown rice, quinoa, legumes, nuts, veggies and fruit.

You probably heard the message “avoid white foods.” Keep in mind the guidelines issued by Health Canada are actually to consume at least half of your grains as whole grains. This means there is still room for some of your favorite refined grains or so-called “white foods”.

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Note that one of the most successful ways to sustain long-term weight loss is being able to save room for your favorites and avoid feeling deprived.

#3 Volume

If you are trying to lose weight, chances are you are shrinking down the portions of higher calorie foods on your plate. This can leave your plate looking small and unsatisfying. One of the most important ways to help ensure you feel full at meals is to increase the size of your vegetable intake. Veggies can help fill your stomach without adding extra calories. An entire English cucumber has less than 50 calories!

If you struggle to eat enough veggies and fruit thinking about having two types at one meal rather than only one. Food psychology studies have shown that you will eat more when there is more variety. If you are having steak/fish, rice and carrots for dinner add sliced tomatoes or a tossed salad to increase volume without adding extra calories.

As with everything in life, balance is key. A meal exclusively based on veggies will not supply enough energy or fullness to sustain you and can lead to overeating later. As a rough rule of thumb, aim for half the plate veggies/fruit, a quarter plate of protein rich foods and a quarter plate of grains or starchy foods.

#4 Temperature

Why is it that even if matched for calories a sandwich may be less filling than leftover stir-fry for lunch? For many of us, warm foods are comfort foods.

Mid-afternoon can be a hungry time of the day for many people since the gap between lunch and supper is often a longer one and energy levels and motivation begin declining as the day goes on. If you are finding raw veggies and dip or a fruit is simply not enough and you are walking through the door “hangry” (hungry and angry mixed together), think about having an afternoon snack that is warm in temperature. A warm cup of hot cocoa, tea latte or latte may be more satisfying than cold yogurt or milk. Vegetable soup may offer more satiety than raw veggies or a salad.

At your hungriest times of the day think about where you can add something warm to increase satiety.

Andrea Holwegner, known as the Chocoholic Dietitian, is founder and president of Health Stand Nutrition Consulting Inc., a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and a media expert for the Dietitians of Canada. For nutrition counselling information and to sign up for a free monthly newsletter loaded with nutrition tips, recipes and more visit www.healthstandnutrition.com. Twitter @chocoholicRD.

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