



IN PREVENTING OVERWEIGHT - IT'S NOT ONLY WHAT, BUT HOW YOU EAT

Wolfing down your meal may double your risk of being overweight. Drinking just the right amount of alcohol is the key to staying lean. It is not just what you eat but how you eat that can make all the difference.

Eating fast causes obesity.

A Japanese study looking at eating speed and feelings of fullness showed, when looking at fast eating, that 84% of men who eat fast are more likely to become overweight and 50% of women are likely to suffer the same fate. If the study looked at fast eating, in addition to waiting until you feel full, all people were over three times more likely to become overweight. This is because the signals to the brain from your stomach to tell you when to stop eating, are slow. If you eat too fast your stomach will fill before you can register that it is full.

This problem can have been caused in people by learning in childhood to eat more and quickly. It could also be an evolutionary advantage – grab more food while it is available. Studies have shown that the old wives tale to chew your food 20 times before swallowing is true – this way you will never overfill yourself before the signal to stop eating reaches your brain.

How about those of you who only eat when you are hungry?

If you wish to maintain your weight this is not a good idea because if you wait until you are hungry you will eat the handiest thing available which may well be a poor choice. The hunger messenger in your brain called ghrelin activates centres in your brain which form part of a primitive reward system that is involved in addictive behaviours. So you see “a reward” more when you are hungry. This leads to more desperate food behaviour – you will grasp the nearest and quickest thing available, rather than making a wise food choice. It is best for you to eat regularly and not allow yourself to become hungry.

When it comes to alcohol, anything over four alcohol drinks a day or binge drinking increases obesity. It is best to drink less than five drinks a week if you want to maintain your weight. Also watch out for that drink before a meal because this increases your appetite and you eat more.

Eating in front of the TV certainly leads to obesity because you don't notice how much you are eating. Studies have shown that in women watching three hours of television versus those watching one hour of television have eaten 1.9 times more. In men the figure is 2.2 times more.

So, eating is an art. If you want to manage your weight smartly, you need to think about the way you eat, not just what you eat.