Mindless Eating

We overeat for many reasons; plate shape and size, brand names, packaging and food labels, lighting, color, and advertising as well as just to be sociable. We are influenced by many things inside and outside the home; so how can we make it work for, rather than against, us?

Tips to be mindful while eating at home

- Serve meals on an 8" dinner plate instead of a 10" one. A plate just 2" smaller means about 22% less calories are put on a plate.

- Serve smaller portions of the meal. Enjoy the meal, rest a few minutes and then, if you or the children are really still hungry, take seconds.

- Leave the serving dishes in the kitchen. The distance between the family table and the kitchen is often enough to make us consider if we are really hungry.

- Look at what you eat *before* you eat it. Instead of eating right from the box, put your portion in a small bowl and leave the box in the cupboard. It is less tempting to eat the whole box!

- Plan meals. Knowing what is on the menu and when a meal and snack is planned, helps to manage hunger and prevent the overeating that happens when you skip meals.

- Dim the lights and play soft music. Make your family table a fine dining experience! We eat slower and enjoy food more in this kind of environment. Our body then has time to signal fullness and we eat less but are satisfied.

- Separate food from technology. We are less mindful and eat much more food when we eat while sitting in front of the TV or computer; or while we scan a cellphone or read a newspaper. Leave the distractions behind and eat at the family table.

Making healthy food choices is different from deciding how much to eat. Most of us think we are not affected by mindless eating. The truth is we do not know it is happening. Be aware, make a few simple changes and enjoy family meal time.