

February 2014

# Kindred *Spirits*

## The art of mindful eating

### Pay attention to your body, mind and thoughts

#### Dietary Guidelines

Dietary Guidelines promote health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. You can take action on the Dietary Guidelines by making changes in these three areas:

##### Balancing calories

- ◆ Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- ◆ Avoid oversized portions.

##### Foods to increase

- ◆ Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.

##### Foods to reduce

- ◆ Compare sodium in foods and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- ◆ Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

Small changes can lead to healthier eating.

Do you have a habit of eating when you are bored, lonely, stressed out, depressed or even tired? Sometimes we find ourselves eating, not because we are hungry, but because we are seeking comfort. Mindful eating is simply defined as being conscious of *why* you are eating.

According to Damaris Karanja, MU Extension nutrition and health education specialist, "Mindful eating helps us to move away from the diet mentality and it puts us in touch with our inner self. Mindfulness is being attentive to your body, mind, thoughts and feelings as you eat."

##### ◆ Mindfulness of the Body

Listen to your body and be in touch with your inner self. How does your body tell you when it's hungry or full? Does your stomach rumble, do you have hunger pains? Do you ignore your body's feedback? A good rule of thumb is to eat when your hunger scale is between 3 and 6 (on a scale of 1-10). At level 1 you are beyond hungry. You are totally out of energy, can't concentrate and feel dizzy. At level 10 you are beyond full or stuffed – you are physically miserable. Conscious awareness of what is going on inside your body helps you know when you are *satisfied* rather than stuffed or starving.

##### ◆ Mindfulness of Food

Are you paying attention to every bite or are you eating mindlessly without paying attention to the texture, temperature, taste and even the sound of food? Eat your food

slowly and pay attention to every single bite. People often say, "I don't know how I finished that bag of chips". Pay attention to the quantity of food that you consume instead of eating or snacking mindlessly.

##### ◆ Mindfulness of Feelings

What emotions do you experience that may trigger you to start or stop eating? Sometimes the strongest longings for food happen when you're at your weakest point emotionally. Many people turn to food for comfort — consciously or unconsciously — when they're facing a difficult problem or looking to keep themselves occupied. Pay attention to how you're feeling when you eat and how hungry you are. Sometimes, coping with your feelings is more important than changing the foods you eat.

##### ◆ Mindfulness of Thoughts

Be mindful of your thoughts related to your body weight or eating habits. Negative thoughts may trigger mindless eating. Pay careful attention to "should" and "should not" thoughts, critical thoughts (I'm so fat!), food rules, "good" and "bad" food categories. If you make a mistake, learn to forgive yourself and focus on the positive changes you are making in your eating habits and give yourself credit for making other changes that ensure better health.

##### Resources:

*Intuitive Eating*, by Evelyn Tribole and Elyse Resch;  
*Eating Mindfully: How to End Mindless Eating & Enjoy a Balanced Relationship with Food*, by Susan Albers;  
Healthy for Life Web site, <http://www.umssystem.edu/ums-curators/wellness/>

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# Keeping kids safe

## Be prepared in case of an emergency

Whether you are raising young grandchildren full-time or just caring for them in your own home occasionally, it is important to practice some basic “child-proofing” rules. Consider how much these practices have changed over the years.

According to Diana Milne, MU Extension human development specialist, “What was considered a safe practice when you were raising your own children might not be safe today.”

For example, a used car seat or a crib that you pick up at a garage

sale might not meet today’s safety standards, even if it looks to be in excellent condition.

Did you know:

- ◆ Accidents are more likely to occur when a child is in a new situation or under stress
- ◆ Boys tend to take more risks and suffer more injuries than girls
- ◆ Three out of four poisonings take place when adults are at home
- ◆ Accidents can involve children under age 5 who have mistaken household cleaners or medicines for soda and candy.

pulled down on top of a child.

- ◆ Secure dangling cords on shades & blinds.
- ◆ Make sure a child can’t slip through railings on stairs, decks or porches.
- ◆ Be aware of foods that can cause choking.
- ◆ Use safety gates or locked door on stairwells.
- ◆ Never leave young children alone in the tub or at the pool.

Accidents can happen even to the most safety conscious. Be prepared to act in an emergency. Make sure you have emergency numbers posted or programmed into your phone.

*Resource: “Visiting Grandparents for the Holidays?” Work and Family Life newsletter, Vol. 27, No. 12.*

Other safety suggestions:

- ◆ Secure heavy objects and furniture so that they can’t be

### University of Missouri Extension

#### Urban Region

Clay County	816.407.3490
Jackson County	816.252.5051
	816.482.5850
Jefferson County	636.797.5391
Platte County	816.270.2141
St. Charles County	636.970.3000
St. Louis City	314.367.2585
St. Louis County	314.615.2911
	314.516.6392

#### West Central Region

Bates County	660.679.4167
Benton County	660.438.5012
Camden County	573.346.2644
Cass County	816.380.8460
Cedar County	417.276.3313
Cooper County	660.882.5661
Dallas County	417.345.7551
Henry County	660.885.5556
Hickory County	417.745.6767
Johnson County	660.747.3193
Laclede County	417.532.7126
Moniteau County	573.378.5358
Morgan County	573.378.5358
Pettis County	660.827.0591
Polk County	417.326.4916
St. Clair County	417.646.2419
Vernon County	417.448.2560

## Radon, should you worry?

Radon is a tasteless, odorless, radioactive gas that results from the breakdown of uranium. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), radon is found throughout the United States.

“Exposure to radon can increase your chances of getting lung cancer.” In fact, radon is recognized as the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

As a gas, radon can leak into your house through gaps, cracks, and holes in the foundation. According to Marsha Alexander, MU Extension housing and environmental design specialist, “The only way to know if your home has significant concentrations of radon is to have the house tested.” All homes with or without basements should be tested.

Do it yourself radon test kits are available for free for Missouri residents by calling 573-751-6102. Or go online to <http://www.health.mo.gov/living/environment/radon/testkit.php>. You can also buy a radon test kit at some home improvement stores. Follow all package directions exactly as stated to make sure you are conducting the test properly. Send the device promptly after conducting the test.