

CHICAGO FIT NUTRITION INSIDER

HOW TO STOP SNACKING WHEN STUCK AT HOME



CHICAGO FIT
P E R F O R M A N C E

Stuck at home more than usual?

If working from home is new to you or if being home more is out of your element - it is easy to slip into snacking all day and eating too much.

I'll give you CORE FOUR nutrition habits for managing snacking while at home.

PART 1. RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

Set Your Environment for Success

RED light foods are foods that you tend to overeat. RED light foods easily lead you to become out of control of your portions. These are the foods you typically "know" you shouldn't be snacking on, but lack the willpower to stay away from. "I'm talking to you Fritos!" .

GREEN light foods are veggies, lean proteins (animal or plant), healthy fats, complex carbs and fruits. The foods you typically "know" you should eat more of.

At CFP we always talk about controlling what you can control (and letting the rest go). This not only helps you manage stress better - another culprit for overeating - it also focuses your energy appropriately on the things that will make you successful.

Set up your environment (it is in your control): .

- **Take an honest assessment** of what you have in the kitchen taking note of YOUR red light foods. If you don't live alone, have a talk with your family about what is in the kitchen. Rome wasn't built in a day, so it is okay to start with one or two changes.
- **Temporarily remove RED light foods from your house.** If you don't have it, you can't eat it. Stock up on more GREEN light foods. You will eat what is in your environment. SUCCESS! .
- **Make the GREEN light foods easy to access and eat.** Wash and prep as much as you can so when hunger strikes you don't have to fuss with it - just eat it.

- **Simple rule of thumb:** The easier your GREEN light foods are to access and eat, the more likely you are going to eat them. NOT EASY: Whole red bell pepper, unwashed, back corner of the counter in a bag waiting to rot. EASY: Washed, sliced, eye-level of the fridge (next to the hummus), ready to eat!

PART 2: SCHEDULE EATING TIMES

Here is what someone shared with me last week. "My kids have been eating non-stop since they are home 24/7. "MOM! Can I have a snack?" has been a theme song in her house."

So this is what she did, which I think it's very smart. Jokingly she asked them to use their "school stomachs". What this means is they have set a general meal and snack schedule. This helps all of them in the house build awareness about our eating habits - are they eating because their bodies need food or are they eating because they are bored?

That principle and approach could be applied to pretty much anyone. Start with a general meal time schedule and begin to notice your eating habits. Do this for one full week and pay attention, notice and name.

Next week I'll share Part 3. (Continue to work on last week's habit - RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT).

Remember, it doesn't have to be "perfect" - just 1% better everyday.

PART 3: MINDFUL EATING

You have heard it before and you may have even said it yourself, but what does mindful eating even mean?

It can vary depending on the person and situation. Right now with COVID-19 many are experiencing empty shelves at the grocery store and navigating social distancing.

While food supply is not at long term risk, it is still good to be mindful of how much we take and consume overall.

In our house, we are focusing on taking only what we need (this goes for paper towels and other items too).

Here is how to be mindful and help reduce overeating:

- Start with small portions.
- When finished, build in a pause.
- Wait 10-15 minutes and only take more if you are still hungry after the pause.

Adding this pause gives your brain time to catch up to your stomach - you may find you really are not hungry for more.

Assessing hunger.

Use a scale of 1-10 to assess your hunger cues.

- 1 = hungry enough to eat your arm.
- 10 = need to unbutton your pants.

Start eating when you are around a level 2-3 (this helps you avoid waiting too long and getting “out of control” hungry).

Stop eating when you are a level 7-8 (about 80% full).

This will help you stop eating before you are “stuffed”.

Give the mindfulness habit a try along with the last two weeks of habits (RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT and SCHEDULE MEAL TIMES).

Part 4: SHORTEN THE DISTANCE.

This last tip addresses snacking if it already happened. (Make sure to review the first three tips: **RED LIGHT/GREEN LIGHT, SCHEDULE MEAL TIMES, MINDFUL EATING**).

Screw perfection. You have heard it before. Especially if from the CFP coaches.

Aiming for perfection will lead to the ALL or NOTHING phenomenon. This can be a slippery slope to face diving into the pantry of snacks for multiple days (even weeks).

If (and for many people, when) the snacking gets a little carried away - don't beat yourself up.

Instead - recognize it happened, then **SHORTEN THE DISTANCE** between where you are in that moment and getting to your next balanced meal.

This means, don't let the poor eating habits continue at the next meal. Don't let that one binge lead to several meals, days, and weeks of bad eating habits.

One snacking episode isn't a problem. But if it is allowed to go on and on, then it can have a negative effect.

You do this by taking **ACTION** and taking **CONTROL** back.

Take control of the very next meal. Aim for fresh produce, a complex carb, and a lean protein (plant or animal).

Give the "shorten the distance" habit a try along with the last three weeks of habits (**RED LIGHT/GREEN LIGHT, SCHEDULE MEAL TIMES, MINDFUL EATING**).