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Am I Hungry? E-Newsletter November 2008

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I Can't Believe I Ate the Whole Thing! **How to Prevent and Deal with Holiday Overeating**

By Michelle May, M.D.

Excerpt from *Am I Hungry? What to Do When Diets Don't Work* – see Holiday Gift Pack below!

I love the holidays. For weeks, our family has been planning for the significant meals we'll share. We're each assigned to bring the traditional dishes we've become known for—and with our large family, there's always plenty. During the blessing my uncle always gives thanks for the food that nourishes our bodies. Then the nourishment begins!

I know these types of gatherings take place all over the world, year after year. The comments are as traditional as the food. "Honey, this is the best turkey you've ever made. Please pass the potatoes and gravy again." "I can't eat another bite or I swear I'll explode." "Alright, just a little sliver of pie then." After dinner people are sprawled out in front of the television, occasionally groaning or dozing off.

As much I love these special occasions, I now know that there's an invisible line that I can cross if I'm not mindful. That line separates a great celebration with wonderful food from an afternoon of discomfort and regret. I constantly remind myself I live in a land of abundance where turkey and potatoes are available year round and food will always taste good. So why eat until I'm miserable? Why not enjoy the event and still feel good when it's over?



When you live in a land of abundance, deciding how much food you *need* to eat is critical for lifelong weight management and health. As importantly, when you eat the perfect amount of food, you'll feel satisfied—just right!

Just Right

Think for a moment about how you feel when you're satisfied. If you're mindful, you'll notice that as you become full, the flavor of the food goes from fabulous to just OK and it gets harder to give food and eating your full attention. You are content, fulfilled, and happy. You feel light and energetic and ready for your next activity.

When you eat more than you need, you'll feel unnecessarily uncomfortable, sleepy and sluggish. Eating too much causes you to feel low energy so you may not want to be active. Of course your body will have no choice but to store the excess as fat. It can also lead to feeling guilty which often leads to even more overeating.

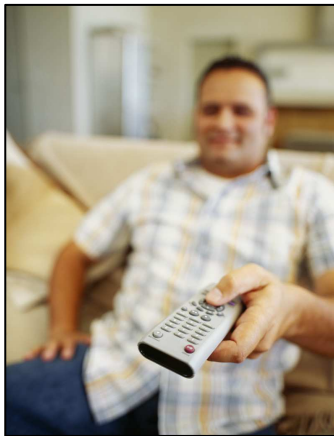
So what can you do to prevent overeating – and what should you do when it happens anyway?

Prevention is the Best Medicine

- Before you start eating, decide how full you want to be when you're done. It's fine to decide you want to be stuffed, as long as you've thought about the consequences.
- Estimate how much food you'll need to eat to reach that level of fullness. Prepare, serve or order only as much as you think you'll need; if you were served too much, move the extra food aside.
- Before you start eating, visually or physically divide the food in half to create a "speed bump."
- Eat mindfully and check your fullness level when you hit that speed bump in the middle of eating, at the end of your meal, and again 20-30 minutes later.
- If your goal is to feel satisfied and comfortable, it will help to move away from the table or move the food away from you to signal that you're done as soon as you are get even close.

Am I Full?

Some questions you might want to ask yourself to help you determine how full you are:



- How does my stomach feel? Can I feel the food? Is there any discomfort or pain? Does my stomach feel full, stretched, full or bloated?
- How does my body feel? Do I feel comfortable and content? Do my clothes feel tight? Is there any nausea or heart burn? Do I feel short of breath?
- How is my energy level? Do I feel energetic and ready for the next activity? Or am I sleepy, sluggish, tired or lethargic?
- What do I feel like doing now?

If you've overeaten, sit quietly for a few moments and become completely aware of how you feel. Don't beat yourself up; just focus on the sensations so you'll remember them the next time

you're tempted to overeat. You may be less likely to repeat the mistake if you think through the consequences first.

Don't Miss the Lesson

When you realize you've eaten too much, ask yourself, "Why did it happen?" and "What could I do differently next time?" Turn your mistake into a learning experience.

There are a lot of reasons people eat past the point of satisfaction: habits, learned behaviors, past dieting, and mindless eating. For example:

"It was a special occasion." You're more likely to overeat if you only give yourself permission to eat enjoyable foods on special occasions. You don't need an excuse to have a wonderful meal—so why use a special occasion as a reason to overeat? Ask yourself, "If this occasion is so special, why would I want to eat until I feel miserable?"

Here are some of the other holiday triggers you'll learn how to handle in chapter 7 of *Am I Hungry?*

I felt obligated.
It tasted good so I just kept eating.
I wanted to taste everything.
I was afraid I wouldn't get that food again.
I saved the best for last.
I ate food I didn't enjoy.
I wasn't paying attention as I ate.
I ate too fast.
I mindlessly picked at the leftovers.
I had too much on my plate.
I was keeping up with someone else.
I wanted to get my money's worth.
I hate to let food go to waste.

I Ate Too Much! Now What?

Even people who eat instinctively sometimes overeat. However, although they may feel regretful and uncomfortable, they don't typically feel guilty. They don't think, "Well, I've already blown it; I might as well keep eating then start my diet tomorrow." Instead, they just listen to their body and return to eating instinctively by allowing hunger to drive their next cycle. By listening to your body's wisdom, you can compensate for occasional overeating.

After you overeat, wait and see when you get hungry again. Rather than continuing to eat out of guilt or by the clock, listen to your body. It probably won't need food as soon so you may not be hungry for your usual snack or even your next meal.

When you get hungry again, ask yourself, "What do I want?" and "What do I need?" Don't punish yourself or try to compensate for overeating by restricting yourself. If you try to make yourself eat foods you don't really want, you'll feel deprived and fuel your eat-repent-repeat cycle. Trust and respect what your body tells you because it's likely that it will naturally seek

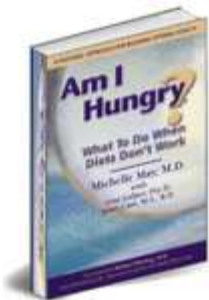
balance, variety and moderation. You might notice that you're hungry for something small or something light—maybe a bowl of soup or cereal, a piece of fruit or a salad.

Lastly, don't use exercise to punish yourself for overeating; instead be active all the time and use the fuel you consume to live a full and satisfying life.

Eat Mindfully. Live Vibrantly!
Michelle May, M.D.

HOLIDAY GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING! **GIVE THE GIFT OF MINDFULNESS & HEALTH WITH AN *AM I HUNGRY?* GIFT PACK**

Make your holiday gift giving meaningful and simple. Give someone you care about (perhaps yourself?) the gift of mindfulness and health with this special combination which includes:



- A copy of *Am I Hungry? What to Do When Diets Don't Work* – uncommon sense for breaking free from the eat-repent-repeat cycle
- *Am I Hungry?*® Bracelet - a beautiful handcrafted reminder to ask the simple but powerful question, “Am I hungry?” whenever you feel like eating.



SAVE \$14.95 with shipping and handling when you buy them together!

Limited offer so click here NOW:

<http://www.profcs.com/SecureCart/SecureCart.aspx?mid=A9D49D09-0DE6-4F38-A12A-8F61E09316A7&gid=104d846e9ba3c70d9efa39abd240405e>

SPACES ARE FILLING FAST! **NEXT *AM I HUNGRY?*® FACILITATOR TELE-TRAINING: JANUARY 21, 2009**

Health professionals - mark your calendar for Wednesdays beginning 1/21/09. In just 12 weeks you'll be ready to offer Am I Hungry? Workshops in your community, office or company.

Register and/or download a complete information packet at

<http://www.amihungry.com/facilitator-training.shtml>.

***AM I HUNGRY?*® WORKSHOPS COMING UP**

Workshops (and complimentary introductory workshops) coming up soon:

Menlo Park, California; Annapolis, Maryland; Fleming Island, Florida; Glendale, Arizona; Mashpee, Massachusetts; Reston, Virginia; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Palo Alto, California; Provo, Utah; Portland, Oregon; Cornelius, North Carolina; Millis, Massachusetts; and Kent, Washington.

Read more and find a workshop near you: <http://www.amihungry.com/weight-management-workshops.shtml>.

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