

One more cookie may or may not change your waistline.



But it will change your brain!

When, what and how much you eat is decided by a piece of your brain called the hypothalamus. Overeating rewires the hypothalamus, which then changes the way our brain tells us to eat. A brain that is nourished with a high-fat diet becomes unable to respond to the sugar found in high-fat foods, essentially increasing your sugar tolerance and tricking your brain into thinking you need more of these foods. This perpetuates the problem of overeating. A brain that is nourished with a healthy, balanced diet is better at recognizing and pumping the brakes when it comes to eating too much sugar. For example, if you eat a few cookies every day, your brain starts to need more than a few cookies to feel the joy the cookies once brought you, so eventually you find yourself eating several or a dozen cookies a day. If eating a cookie is not a common occurrence, it'll likely only take one cookie to satisfy you.

When you spend more time at home with easy access to food, it's easy to accidentally overeat. Here are some tips for kicking the habit.

What to avoid...

- **Distracted eating.** Working or scrolling through your phone while you eat will distract you from recognizing the signs that you're full, causing you to overeat.

- **Going in blind.** When you're eating from a full bag of pretzels, it's hard to stop!

- **Dehydration.** Being dehydrated plays tricks on your mind and will make you crave food.

What to do instead...

- **Attentive eating.** Relax with your meal without distractions. You'll enjoy the time and the food more.

- **Prepare** — or at least think about — what you'll eat for the day ahead of time. Portion food out in containers or buy individual serving sized snacks.

- **Stay hydrated.** If you're not motivated to drink regular water, make it interesting. Add fruit, cucumber, fresh mint, bubbles, or drink from a "fun" water bottle.

