



DYNAMIC AGING

Mindful Eating

I'm reading a book called *Mindless Eating*, by Brian Wansink, Ph.D. It is an interesting look at the cues that cause us to eat, many times when we are not hungry. I'll refer to this book in columns to come, but my purpose for this one is to switch the mindset: use the word "mindful" instead of "mindless". Being mindful means being aware of what we are eating, when we are eating, and why we are eating. Let's take an example of mindful versus mindless eating, adapted from *Rate Your Energy* (WebMD).

I often feel tired by mid afternoon, so I give myself energy by having coffee, soda, or a candy bar. Many people experience "mid afternoon slump;" our body clocks are often set for an energy sag between 3 and 5 pm. But the "solutions" most people choose just perpetuate the problem. Caffeine and sugar are very quickly metabolized, especially on an empty stomach, so they can give you an energy surge followed by an energy dump. If you're grabbing a candy bar or soda instead of a healthy lunch, it's no surprise you're slumping later on. For consistent energy, try spreading your food throughout the day. Eat four small meals that combine protein and carbohydrates to keep your blood sugar from crashing, the usual culprit in the "mid-afternoon slump". For example, have an egg-white omelet and whole wheat toast to start your day, a mid morning snack of peanut butter and celery, and a hearty chicken salad for lunch. Mid afternoon, replace that candy bar with a piece of fruit and a slice of cheese. And, don't forget water! Dehydration also saps your energy, so keep your water bottle filled and gulp from that instead of the coffee mug.

Foods high in fiber, such as fresh fruit, vegetables, beans and legumes, nuts, and whole grain products, can help lower your blood sugar levels. Your body digests fiber rich foods more slowly which means glucose (a form of sugar) is absorbed into your blood gradually, thereby helping to even out your blood sugar levels and help you feel full longer. It is recommended that you eat a minimum of 25 grams of fiber per day. A rule of thumb is that a serving (1/2 cup) of a vegetable or fresh fruit is about 3 4 grams, a half cup of legumes is 4 6 grams, a slice of whole grain bread is about 2 grams, and a handful of nuts are about 34 grams.

With a more mindful approach to eating, you can keep your blood sugar from dropping too low, thus increasing your energy levels and sense of well being.