It's not because you're hungry

12 easy tips and tricks to control your eating

So often we eat mindlessly. We put food into our mouths while working on the computer, watching TV or driving in the car. The pleasure of eating lies in slowing down and fully experiencing all of the elements of food. Take some time to explore each of the following during your next meal and see the difference:

1 Put your eating utensil down between bites.

2 Sip water between bites of your meal.

3 Chew your food more times before swallowing. Bonus: this helps improve digestion.

4 Try eating with chopsticks.

5 Set the kitchen timer to see if you can extend your meal for 20 minutes. You may find you don't need second helpings.

6 Protect the home environment. Get rid of temptations for unhealthy foods by keeping them out of the house. Keep the kitchen stocked with healthy options like fruit, veggies, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.

7 Practice portion control. Stick to one serving of whatever you're eating. Check the nutrition label on the product to see the serving size. Use a measuring cup when serving foods like potatoes, rice or pasta to help you stick to a reasonable portion.

8 Eat without TV, phone or computer.

9 Eat sitting down at the table.

10 Balance your plate. Fill half your plate with non-starchy veggies, ¼ with protein and ¼ with grain or starch.

11 Think before you drink. Drink water or low-fat milk with dinner instead of soda, lemonade or iced tea, which are loaded with sugar and calories.

12 Stop, take a deep breath and think before reaching for something unhealthy. Ask yourself if you really want it because you're hungry or because you're stressed. Instead, take a hot bath, go for a walk around the neighborhood or at a local park, write in a journal, or call a close friend or family member. Sometimes it helps to just vent. Watch a funny movie or your favorite movie or listen to classical music. Some studies show it helps lower blood pressure.