

# Prevent Impulse Eating: Helpful Tips

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It's happened to all of us. You know the feeling - you are away from home running errands, or you are out late because you had to stay at work longer. And you realize that you are hungry. Not just a little hungry though. You haven't eaten for hours, your head is starting to throb, and you can't even think straight.

Bottom line: you have to eat. Now!

As you survey your options, you realize that getting something to eat that is even remotely healthy is going to be nearly impossible. But you have little choice, so you grab a burger or a salad with "grilled chicken." (Do you have any idea how much that piece of 'grilled chicken' has been processed and soaked and manipulated and transformed before it arrives in front of you?) Or a small order of fries just to get you through.

And just like that you have put food into your body that will lower your immune response, raise your blood sugar, reduce your energy and contribute to weight gain.

It is a tough situation, and like I said, we've all been there. Sometimes you really do have to eat 'right now.' But over time, these eating emergencies add up and significantly impact your health and fitness achievement.

## Emergency Preparedness

The answer is to stop having eating emergencies, and I will show you how to do this. It does take some planning, but it isn't as hard as you might think.

**The first step** is to make a list of healthy, on-the-go foods that you enjoy eating. Make sure that you include things with healthy fats, protein and carbs (if it's around your workout time). When you are very hungry, you need to have all the macronutrients covered in order to get quick energy, satisfy your hunger and clear your brain fog. This does not have to be a complete meal, but it needs to be balanced enough to substitute for one if needed.

**Here are some ideas to help you get started.**

- **Unsalted nuts.** Walnuts, pecans, hazelnuts, almonds, cashews, Brazil nuts. (These will provide protein and good fat)
- **Raw Veggies.** They are crisp, juicy, cold and sweet and full of the micronutrients your body craves.
- **Cheese.** If you eat dairy, having a small slice of your favorite cheese will give you a complete protein, a little fat and be very comforting. Remember: the goal is to tame the beast inside you that is calling out for a hotdog from the nearest drive through window. *This is a mental exercise as well as physical!*
- **Nut butters.** Cashew, almond, peanut...find your favorite. Almond butter is great on a banana; cashew butter is perfect on whole grain crackers. Go ahead and put 7-8 chocolate chips on top if you want. This is a tiny indulgence that will go far to settle your craving.
- **Boiled eggs.** Do you like cold, salted boiled eggs? They are a powerhouse of protein. Just be sure to get free range eggs.
- **Sardines.** Yes, you read that right. If you like fish, you can buy small packets of wild caught sardines that travel very well.
- **Water.** You have to drink water.

**The second step** seems obvious, but it has to happen if you are going to eliminate impulse eating: *buy the food on your list.* You have to get it in your house, so you have it when you need it.

**The third step** is to plan your food kit. This food has to travel with you, and you have to decide how you are going to transport it. The secret is convenience. If you only have five minutes to grab your kit on your way out the door before work, it has to be streamlined. Ideally you will leave yourself more than five minutes, but life happens.

**Here are some tips to help you set up your food kit for ease and speed.**

- **Small cooler.** Purchase a small cooler that will hold an ice pack and several other things. Keep this in your kitchen so you can grab it on the go.
- **Plates, utensils, napkins.** Whether you use paper/plastic or your everyday items, get a bag and put a couple of plates, some utensils and some napkins in it. You will use this same bag every time you use your kit, so it becomes a habit. It can be a plastic bag, a cloth bag or a paper bag. It doesn't matter. The point is that you can grab this bag on your way out the door and know that it has what you need in it.
- **Small storage containers or plastic bags.** You need individual containers to put your food in. Don't take the whole package of cheese or the whole bag of chocolate chips, because you will end up eating too much. Put one or two pieces of cheese in a container, and put only 7-8 chocolate chips in a bag. Toss some nuts in one container, some cut up fruit in another. Also, you don't have to prepare everything in advance. In a pinch, you can eat a big bell pepper just like an apple! Just have a plan so you can get it fast when needed. Some things don't have to be separately packaged, such as your nut butter. Just toss the whole jar in the cooler...if you can control yourself.
- **A tote bag or duffle bag.** This bag will be your "picnic basket," so to speak. Stuff everything into it that does not go into the cooler.
- **Water bottle.** You need something to store a lot of water in.

## Now do it

You've done the hard part. You've figured out what foods will make you happy and help you through the emergency, you've stocked up on them, you have gathered what you need for transport and you have your water situation figured out.

**All that is left is making it happen.** You have to take the food with you when you leave the house. The first few times you do this, it will seem complicated and tedious. But eventually, you will do it with little thought. It will be habit. That is why using the same cooler, the same bags and the same water container every time is so important. You will likely even find you grab the same foods nearly every time—it's just easier. **And it has to be easy, or you won't do it.**

The happy result is that when you are out and realize you are hungry, you will not have to eat food from a restaurant. You will have an assortment of health and energy promoting foods at your fingertips.



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