

Kick those bad habits!

Now's the time to adopt some new routines so you can start the year eating better and feeling fitter. **Fiona Hunter**, our nutritionist, shows you how



Bad habit... speed eating

Eating too quickly means you're more likely to miss the 'I'm full' signals that the stomach sends the brain, so you end up over-eating. Gulping your food down in a rush can also result in indigestion.

How to break it...

Slow down, chew your food thoroughly before taking another mouthful, and focus on what you're eating. Take a 10-minute break before reaching for a second helping or another course – then ask yourself if you're still hungry before you have any more.

Bad habit... finishing your kids' food

Food eaten from someone else's plate doesn't count – right? Wrong! The handful of chips and those chicken nuggets that you pinched from the kids' dinner all mount up.

How to break it...

Sit down with your children at teatime and have a small snack such as a piece of fruit, a yogurt or a couple of oatcakes with houmous or soft cheese – this way you're less likely to pick at their leftovers.

Bad habit... getting stuck in a food rut

Many of us are happy to stick to the same few safe meals week in, week out, especially when we need to get something on the table quickly. If you eat the same foods all the time you're much more likely to miss out on important nutrients. What's more, it can lead to food cravings and bingeing as you start to find your meals dull and unsatisfying.

How to break it...

Resolve to try at least one new recipe or food each week. You'll find plenty of delicious seasonal ideas in *Good Food* each month.

And with up to 50,000 products stocked in the average supermarket, there's no excuse for not cooking with a variety of foods. So next time you go shopping, try something different.

Bad habit... mindless munching

A handful of peanuts or crisps while you're preparing dinner or a few too many chocolate biscuits while you're watching TV – we eat for all sorts of reasons and it often has more to do with habit than genuine hunger.

How to break it...

Think about what you're eating. Make a rule that you can only eat when sitting down at the table, as this will make you focus on what you're eating and help to avoid unconscious nibbling and over-indulging.

● **For lots of recipe ideas, including snacks and breakfasts, visit bbcgoodfood.com**

Bad habit... food on the run

Eating on the move can make it hard for you to make healthy choices. It's also more difficult to gauge how much you've eaten and, because your stomach never feels full, you're more likely to overdo it.

How to break it...

Have three regular meals plus a couple of healthy snacks in-between. Schedule meals and snacks for around the same time each day to train your stomach and brain to recognise meal times. Be prepared – pop a pack of dried fruit in your bag so you're not tempted to buy chocolate or crisps.

Bad habit... skipping breakfast

Getting up in the morning can be hard, especially in winter, which is why it's tempting to miss breakfast and have an extra 10 minutes in bed. But if you do, you're missing the opportunity to get a good headstart on several key vitamins and minerals, and dietary fibre. Skipping breakfast can also affect your performance throughout the morning. A study by the University of Swansea found that people who ate breakfast tended to work faster, make fewer mistakes in logic tests and have better memory recall compared with those who hadn't eaten breakfast.

How to break it...

A bowl of cereal with semi-skimmed milk and a glass of fruit juice is a quick, nutritious start to the day. Get out a bowl, spoon and cereal and fill the kettle before bed to save time. If you can't face eating first thing, pack up a healthy snack to take with you – a smoothie or yogurt with some fresh or dried fruit are good choices. A balanced breakfast should include foods from each of the food groups. Try to include at least two servings of fruit.

Bad habit... picking at leftovers

Leftover cooked food will tempt you every time you open the fridge door, and picking at it just piles on the calories.

How to break it...

As soon as you've finished eating, put any leftovers in the freezer (or give them to the dog) so you won't be tempted later. Brush your teeth, rinse your mouth with mouthwash or chew some gum after a meal – the minty taste will remind you that you have finished eating. Try not to cook too much food at mealtimes – stick to normal-size portions so you don't have any leftovers.