

Have You Deprived Yourself of Enjoyable Foods?

Depriving yourself of the foods you enjoy will not help you lose weight —even if you are restricting high calorie foods. This is because the deprivation eventually leads to binges, cravings, overeating and guilt. Food deprivation, often called *restrictive eating*, also causes you to dislike nutritious foods. Healthier foods become synonymous with dieting and deprivation. Restricted foods represent reward and pleasure. Viewing foods in this way sabotages your efforts to manage your weight and eat nutritiously.

Take the Deprivation Test

Many people are not aware that they are depriving themselves. Answer the following questions to see if you are depriving yourself of enjoyable foods without knowing it.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
1. Do you routinely overeat at restaurants, parties and other events that include food?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Do you feel guilty when you eat your favorite high calorie foods?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Do you feel out of control at all you can eat at restaurants or buffets?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Do you always eat dessert at restaurants, even if you are full?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Do you crave the same types of foods on a regular basis?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Do you have the same meals and snacks most of the time?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Are you constantly watching what you eat or cutting back?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Are most or all of your foods low-fat, fat-free or low calorie?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. If a food is not low fat, do you restrain from eating it?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Do you eat your favorite foods only if you feel that you <i>deserve</i> them?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Do you think of foods, or your eating, as good or bad?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you answered *yes* to 3 or more of these questions, you may be depriving yourself of foods you enjoy. The more *yes* answers you have, the more deprived you may be. If your deprivation is an attempt to control or lose weight, you should know that the negative effects outweigh any positive benefits. Read on to learn how to stop depriving yourself. If your deprivation is related to a special diet due to medical problems, consider a consultation with a Registered Dietitian. Sometimes you may be able to enjoy small amounts of the restricted foods without exacerbating your health problem. [For example, a diabetic may enjoy sugar-containing foods by following some eating guidelines.]

Overcoming the Effects of Food Deprivation

The most important thing you can do to overcome the effects of deprivation is to stop depriving yourself of the foods you enjoy. Giving yourself permission to eat whatever you want, whenever you want, no matter what the nutrient or caloric content, eventually leads to more moderate and nutritious eating habits. Even if you want to lose weight you can still enjoy the foods you love.

Legalize the Foods You Restrict

List below the foods that you restrict. Then consider legalizing those foods, either one at a time or all together. [See *Legalizing All Foods* handout]. Promise to never again deprive yourself of enjoyable foods. Eventually the M&Ms, for example, will become like rice in your pantry: enjoyable and satisfying in reasonable amounts and still there a week later!
