



The Benefits of Gratitude for Healthy Choices

With the Thanksgiving holiday upon us, and the special time of Advent and Christmas approaching, gratitude is often on our minds this time of year. The holidays have a way of encouraging us to give thanks for all the good in our lives. As we have heard, and hopefully have experienced through the practice of gratitude, gratitude has been said to improve emotional and mental health. It can build community and improve connections. While there are many benefits to practicing gratitude, one lesser-known benefit is that gratitude can improve our eating habits at the table. And yes, for the better. Celebrating Thanksgiving is the perfect time to be open to this.

Gratitude is theorized to help have a positive energy, including for our eating habits, due to an association with positive emotions. According to Arash Emamzadeh at [Psychology Today](#), studies show that those who practiced gratitude before meals, made healthier choices. The research also indicated that if gratitude was practiced more, healthy habits could be maintained. Emamzadeh states that by practicing gratitude, one can better navigate feelings of anxiety and depression after a negative event. For example, when a feeling of distress may have had you reaching for a “comfort” food, instead spend several moments thinking of things you are grateful for. This can help put you in a better mood and make you less likely to “self-soothe” with a (unhealthy) snack.

[Purdue University](#) cites research from *The Journal of Positive Psychology* supporting a similar idea. People who regularly practiced gratitude were recorded to eat more fruits and vegetables, stating that gratitude helps improve sense of self, thus encouraging healthier choices.

Research from the [Teladoc Health Library](#) notes that practicing gratitude improves your mood, releasing dopamine and serotonin when you are feeling grateful and relaxed. The researchers noted this can aid in digestion, especially when eating slowly and mindfully, giving your brain enough time to tell you when you are full. This makes it easier to avoid overeating and can help with weight management.

Teladoc lists some ways to practice gratitude at meal times:

- Take a special moment to pause before diving in, and say grace before a meal
- Thank those who prepared the meal
- Discuss what you are grateful for with those at the table
- Practice mindful eating by eating slowly and savoring your food

Eating with the added ingredient of gratitude can help you make better choices. While Thanksgiving can be a time to restart or reset practicing gratitude, doing so regularly can help you make healthier choices in all seasons.