

Have Your Cake and Eat it Too

By: Emily Izer, dietetic intern

Did you know that eating desserts can be part of a well-balanced diet?

For example, if you're trying to lose weight the first thing to go is often the sweets. But, it's human nature to crave what we can't have. So after several days (or hours, depending on your will power) of internal struggle trying to tell yourself, "I can't eat that cupcake for dessert because I have to fit into those skinny jeans," you eventually give in to the chocolaty goodness of a warm cupcake after dinner. And oh, does it taste good... But after the cupcake's been devoured and you stop to consider what just happened, you start feeling guilty for what you've done and decide that your new diet has been ruined.

Sound familiar?

Have you ever considered what the outcome might look like if you had just allowed yourself to eat the cupcake to begin with? Odds are it would look quite different.

That's because when we tell ourselves we can't have something it leads to feelings of deprivation. Deprivation leads us to crave the forbidden item. Most times the cravings become too strong for our will power to ignore and we eventually concede. When we give in to the craving we get a sense of relief, but after we feel regret and guilt. This entire scenario, when put into the context of weight loss, sets a person up for failure nine times out of ten.

In contrast, if we give ourselves permission to indulge in a sweet treat we can completely avoid the feelings of deprivation, cravings, and guilt that can ruin a diet.

Although it's ok to allow ourselves to enjoy desserts, there are certain things we can keep in mind that will allow us to enjoy them without stretching our waistlines:

1. **Enjoy a dessert with a friend.** Sharing a dessert with someone is fun and you will consume half as much.
2. **Choose lower fat options for dessert.** You won't feel guilty after eating Italian ice instead of triple fudge chocolate ice cream with rainbow sprinkles.
3. **Give and take with portions.** If you do want to have a big piece of pie after dinner, eat smaller portions for your meal.
4. **Small yet satisfying.** Sometimes all you need is a lifesaver or Hershey kiss to satisfy your sweet tooth.
5. **Don't forget the fruits.** Desserts don't always have to be cookies, cakes and ice cream. Try a fruit salad or fruit smoothie instead.

The bottom line is: you can have your cake and eat it too.