

More chewing may be the way to ingest fewer calories

By Heidi Mitchell, Wall Street Journal

Over the holidays, Americans will undoubtedly overindulge, gulping down their first plateful and racing back for seconds. But is there an optimal way to masticate?

One expert, Klaus Bielefeldt, director of the Neurogastroenterology & Motility Center at the University of Pittsburgh, chews on the subject.

Digestion starts in the mouth, says Bielefeldt, and chewing initiates the process.

“Mechanically, chewing breaks down the food into tiny pieces so that it is easier to digest,” he says. “Chemically, chewing releases saliva, a lubricant that helps food to slide down the esophagus and begin the breakdown of carbohydrates with the help of the enzyme amylase.”

The longer you chew, the more fragmented food particles become, which eases the digestive process in the gut and stomach.

“And you won’t swallow a whole toothpick that someone left in the turkey, which I’ve seen,” says Bielefeldt.

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