

# Follow the 80/20 Rule

## Avoid all-or-nothing thinking

### *Key Messages*

Many people who struggle with eating are perfectionists. They have high expectations of themselves. They may be rigid in their thinking. Foods are either good or bad, allowed or not allowed. There is no in-between.

If they are not closely following a regimented diet, they feel out of control. However, strict dietary rules make it is easy to fail. When a perfectionist slips off the diet, they might think, “I’ve blown it now, I might as well eat whatever I want and try for perfection again tomorrow”. But who can be perfect all of the time?

Try living by the 80/20 rule. It is an unrealistic expectation to think you can eat a perfect diet 100% of the time. Everyone needs a treat now and again to avoid feeling deprived. In fact, it is helpful to plan on having a treat. Eat so that 80% of the time you make healthy food choices, and 20% of the time you allow yourself some less healthy food GUILT-FREE.

### Here's what you do . . .

1. Don't try and totally avoid any specific food unless it is necessary for medical reasons.
2. Give yourself permission to have some flexibility with your eating pattern. Making healthy choices 80% of the time is very acceptable.
3. Plan to eat a favourite food once a week. This is part of the 80/20 rule and prevents the feeling of deprivation which can lead to unhealthy and uncontrolled eating. When you eat in a less healthy way on occasion, do not see it as “cheating”, but rather as part of an acceptable eating pattern.
4. Tell yourself that there is no time during a snack or a meal at which it is too late to stop. Partial control of a problematic eating episode is better than no control at all.

### You are not alone . . .

I love the 80/20 rule! I can't believe how much better I feel about my eating habits knowing that it's okay, in fact it's encouraged, to have occasional treats. I don't feel like I've cheated or “fallen off the wagon” just because I allow myself a less healthy food choice once in a while. Somehow, this simple rule has helped lessen my food cravings.