

Want to lose weight? Eat off a crinkly plate

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

1 Warmer

Answer the questions.

1. What diets are fashionable at the moment? For example, paleo diet (eating foods that can be hunted or gathered).
2. Why do people follow diets?

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then, find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

concept
manipulate

obese
perceive

crinkly
portion

effort
ridges

trial
tableware

1. full of lots of small folds _____ (para 1)
2. long narrow raised lines along the surface of something _____ (para 1)
3. test something thoroughly to see if it works _____ (para 2)
4. an attempt to do something that is difficult or that involves hard work _____ (para 5)
5. the amount of food that one person eats at a meal _____ (para 9)
6. an idea for something new _____ (para 10)
7. notice or realize something _____ (para 11)
8. influence someone or control something in a clever or tricky way _____ (para 11)
9. too fat, in a way that is dangerous for your health _____ (para 13)
10. things such as knives, forks, dishes etc that you use when you are having a meal _____ (para 13)

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Sarah Boseley

20 May, 2017

- 1 A crinkly plate, designed with ridges that reduce the amount of food it holds, may help people worried about their weight to eat less.
- 2 The plate was designed by Nauris Cinovics, a graphic designer from the Art Academy of Latvia. He is working with a Latvian government agency to develop the idea and hopes to trial it soon. It may look like just another designer plate but it is intended to play tricks on the mind.
- 3 “My idea is to make food appear bigger than it is. It actually looks like there is the same amount of food as on a normal plate – but there is less of it,” said Cinovics. “You are tricking the brain into thinking you are eating more.”
- 4 The plate will be made of clear glass and could turn eating dinner into a more complex and longer process than it is usually for most of us. Getting food out of the ridges in the glass where pieces of fish or carrots may hide will reduce the speed at which people eat their meal.
- 5 Cinovics has also designed heavy cutlery because it makes eating more of an effort and therefore lasts longer. His knife, fork and spoon weigh 1.3kg each. “We tested this and it took 11 minutes to finish a meal with this cutlery rather than seven minutes,” he said.
- 6 “Our brain takes at least 20 minutes to receive the message that we should feel full so, if we eat really fast, we think we need more food – if we eat slowly, the message gets through sooner so we eat less.”
- 7 Cinovics revealed his idea at the European Congress on Obesity in Porto, Portugal, where experts said they were interested in the plate.
- 8 “This seems like a good idea,” said Dr Paul Christiansen from the University of Liverpool’s school of psychology. “If people think they have eaten a full plate of food, they will feel more satisfied.
- 9 “Many people think you have to finish the food on the plate. If you can trick their brains into believing that they have a nice big portion on their plate, they will think they have eaten a full meal. If, on the other hand, you put a small portion on a big plate, they will think they are not satisfied and will want more.”
- 10 Susan Jebb, professor of diet and population health at the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, Oxford University, also thought the concept had potential. “It is an interesting idea because it will reduce portion size and you can have a meal with other people and it looks like you have the same size plate,” she said – although she added that, because there has not yet been a trial, there is no evidence as to how well it will work.
- 11 Jane Ogden, professor in health psychology at the University of Surrey, thought it was an exciting idea, which could be very helpful. “There is lots of evidence that we eat for other reasons than biological need – it is about habit, it is about what we visually perceive,” she said. “Anything that can manipulate any of that could be an effective way of eating less. Of course, we need to see some evidence that this works but, if you can tell your body that you are eating more than you actually are, then you might eat less.”
- 12 Professor Charles Spence, a behavioural psychologist at the University of Oxford who specializes in how we perceive food and taste, said: “This is a nice idea. There are a number of ways of tricking the eye, from use of smaller plates to make it look like there is more, to heavier bowls. The crinkly plate seems to provide the same impression but I do worry how you get the bits out that fall in the ridges. “Slowing down is one thing but the danger is people might get irritated if they perceive it to be difficult.”
- 13 More than 2.1 billion people – 30% of the world’s population – are obese or overweight. “There are many ways to reduce weight – exercises, stress reduction, diets and others. However, there has been hardly any study about how tableware design can contribute to weight loss by changing eating habits.”
- 14 Cinovics says consumer psychologist Brian Wansink, a professor at Cornell University, famous for inventing the concept of “mindless eating”, is his inspiration. Wansink and colleagues introduced the idea of moving from a 12-inch plate to a ten-inch plate, which their research suggests causes people to eat more than 20% less food.
- 15 Crinkles may be unusual in dinner plates but the idea of redesigning crockery and cutlery to trick our brains and our stomachs into believing less food is enough has been around for some time.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 20/05/17

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answers according to the article.

- The plate will help people to lose weight because ...
 - ... it is smaller than normal dinner plates.
 - ... it looks like it holds as much food as a normal dinner plate.
 - ... it's difficult to get the food out of the folds.
- Which of the following is most likely to help you lose weight?
 - a small portion on a large plate
 - a large portion on a small plate
 - a small portion that you think is a large portion
- The designer of the plate is developing the idea with the help of ...
 - ... the European Congress on Obesity.
 - ... a Latvian government agency.
 - ... a British university.
- Another idea the designer has to help people to lose weight is ...
 - ... smaller glass plates that show you how much food you have left.
 - ... cutlery that slows down the speed at which you eat.
 - ... plates with ridges that make eating very stressful.
- A behavioural psychologist thinks that the crinkly plates ...
 - ... might make people annoyed with their meals.
 - ... are still too large and hold too much food.
 - ... are a nice idea but not likely to be successful.
- A professor in health psychology thinks the plates may be helpful because ...
 - ... bits of food will fall into the ridges and we will be unable to finish our meal.
 - ... they will manipulate our biological need for large portions.
 - ... they will trick our minds into thinking we are eating more than we really are.

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4 Word fields

a. List some items of cutlery and crockery that you have at home. Be specific; for example, not just 'plates' but 'dinner plates' and 'side plates'. Try to include:

- roughly how many of each item you have;
- whether they are part of a set;
- whether you bought them yourself or they were presents;
- where you keep them;
- when and how often you use each item.

cutlery	crockery
<i>e.g. 6 steak knives – a wedding present</i>	<i>e.g. 4 egg cups – kept in the back of the cupboard and rarely used</i>

b. Compare your answers with a partner.

5 Discussion

- What could and couldn't you eat from a crinkly plate?
- Have food portions or plates increased in size during your lifetime?
- In your culture, is it polite to finish all the food on your plate?
- Is it better to use a crinkly plate or follow a strict diet? Why?
- What tips do you have for losing weight and eating healthily?

6 Webquest

- a. Draw what you think the plate looks like. Then, compare your drawing to the image at the link below.
www.theguardian.com/society/2017/may/20/want-to-lose-weight-eat-in-a-crinkly-plate-obesity#img-1
- b. Find out more about 'mindless eating'.

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KEY

1 Warmer

(possible answers)

1. (new) Atkins diet (starving yourself of carbohydrates so your body starts burning fat for energy), alkaline diet (based on the idea that modern eating habits cause our body to produce too much acid), 5:2 diet (eat normally for five days a week and fast on the other two days); clean eating (avoiding processed foods)

2 Key words

1. crinkly
2. ridges
3. trial
4. effort
5. portion
6. concept
7. perceive
8. manipulate
9. obese
10. tableware

3 Comprehension check

1. b
2. c
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. c