

## Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Eating Well

Eating well and maintaining your good nutrition habits can be difficult to do during times of stress. With little time to prepare nutritionally sound meals and snacks for yourself or for your family, old eating habits can creep up on you without much notice. For many people, too much work and limited time means grabbing quick snack from the vending machine or picking up dinner at the drive-through. But over time, these fast food choices can lead to weight gain and low energy. How do you eat healthy, tasty, and nutritious foods during high-pressure times?

Try these tips to break you (or keep you) into the habit of eating well at work:

- ❑ **Stock up on food.** Keep a stash of nutritious snacks at your desk, such as bananas, oranges, dried fruits and nuts, baked whole wheat crackers, packets of instant oatmeal or soup, or energy bars. Having these types of foods close at hand will help keep you from running to the vending machine when you're struck by afternoon hunger pangs.
- ❑ **Pack your snacks.** If you bring a cooler to work or if your office has an accessible refrigerator, bring snacks such as individual packs of yogurt or cottage cheese, fruit, and bite-sized vegetables (carrot and celery sticks, broccoli, edamame).
- ❑ **Pack your lunch.** For one week, try preparing and bringing your lunch to work. This will save you money and calories from eating out. Some lunch ideas include grilled chicken breast with vegetables, sandwiches on whole wheat bread or tortillas, homemade or canned soups, or lasagna or spaghetti made with whole wheat pasta. Some frozen meals may be good choices because they are not only convenient, they are also portioned meals, which can help you keep track of how much you are eating. For those of you watching your sodium intake, be aware that canned soups and frozen meals may contain high sodium contents.
- ❑ **Eat breakfast.** Eating something in the morning, either before going to work or at your desk first thing in the morning will help prevent those afternoon hunger pangs.
- ❑ **Cook for the week.** To keep you, and your family, eating well at home after work, try preparing dinner for the week during the weekend, either on Saturday or Sunday night. Prepare large quantities of food, divide it into plastic storage packs for dinner over two or three nights, and store in the refrigerator (or freeze for a different week). When it's time to eat, just take it out and re-heat.
- ❑ **Just say "No!"** Try to avoid the pastry tray often provided at department meetings or workshops. Bring your own snacks, or, if available, reach for a bagel instead.
- ❑ **Walk for food.** If you need to eat out, take a walk to get something to eat. Walking will help you get some exercise, get you out of the office, and hopefully, motivate you to eat something that will provide you with nutrition and energy for the walk back.

- ❑ **Eat 5 A Day.** This means eating at least 5 fresh fruits and vegetables day. Strive to making fresh fruits and vegetables the bulk of what you eat. They help fill you up, but are low in calories, and are good for you.

When you set simple goals with small changes one at a time, you will find that eating well becomes a natural part of your lifestyle. Try bringing your lunch twice a week or restock your snack basket every Monday. A high-pressure, fast-paced work environment does not always have to mean fast food. You can make small changes to improve your eating habits and hopefully, you will feel more energized and better about what you are consuming.

Also see:

**How to Manage the Stress of these Difficult Times**, available at [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu).

**Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Caffeine Use**

**Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Headaches & Muscle Tension**

**Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Sleeping Soundly**

**Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Staying Active**

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