



EATING WELL at work

Different working situations present different healthy eating challenges. *HFG* nutritionist Claire Turnbull offers advice on how to keep on track with your healthy eating, whatever your work routine.

OFFICE OR RETAIL JOB

Eating well when you're working a '9 to 5' job with limited time for breaks can pose challenges. The easy availability of tempting and unhealthy food, limited cooking facilities to make healthy lunches, and the need to grab something quick at lunchtime can mean it's easy to end up eating more kilojoules each day than you need.

SOLUTIONS

- Work out roughly how much food you need to eat during your working day, then pack it up to take with you. If you typically have lunch and two snacks at work, your daily food should include one or two pieces of fruit,



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at least one or two serves of vegies, some healthy carbohydrates (grainy bread, crackers, rice, pasta) and some protein, such as fish, chicken or eggs. Most of us need one or two serves of dairy at work, too – try a skim latté, a tub of low-fat yoghurt or a slice of low-fat cheese on a sandwich.

- Cook a little bit extra at night to make a tasty lunch the next



day. Transform a roasted chicken dinner into the next day's lunch by adding leftover chicken to a spinach or rocket salad with roasted vegies. Leftover mince from a chilli or bolognese? Have it for lunch on a slice of grainy toast.

- Have a desk drawer or locker stash of food. Store nuts, seeds, canned soups, microwavable rice cups, canned tuna and salmon and individual tubs of chopped fruit in juice. Include chutney and a low-fat dressing to add flavour.

- If you don't have time to eat breakfast in the morning, keep a box of cereal at work.

- At morning teas or meetings where food is offered, remind yourself that you don't have to eat cake just because it's there. Have a healthy snack before you go to the event so you feel less hungry.

- If chocolate is your weakness, move the office supply out of your eye line. Out of sight...

- Working late can mean you often turn to takeaway food. If possible, choose a stir-fry style meal, with lean meat or fish, vegies and steamed rice. Even better, if there is a freezer at work, store your own ready meals or leftovers in there.

- If you often buy your lunch or snacks, look online to see if you can find the nutritional information for your favourites. Aim for lunches with less than 2000kJ and 10g total fat, and snacks with less than 600kJ and 5g total fat. Include as many vegetables and fruits as you can.

- If business lunches are a part of your job, try to break the mentality that you need to 'make the most of it'. When you get to the table, have a glass of water before you drink any alcohol (even better, skip the alcohol altogether) and order a lighter meal, such as a garden salad with grilled chicken or steak to keep you feeling satisfied.

SHIFT WORK

Working shifts can be tough on your mental and physical health, so eating well is essential for feeling well. It can be difficult to know what to eat at what time of the day - and with 'junk' food often easy to access, maintaining a healthy balance requires a little bit of thought.

SOLUTIONS

When you are working odd hours, don't get hung up on the time of day but think instead about how you will get all the nutrition you need over 24 hours. In a day, this is what to aim for (the order of the meals will vary depending on the type of shift you are doing):

ONE breakfast-style meal, eg:

- cereal or porridge with skim milk and fruit
- smoothie made with skim milk, low-fat yoghurt, fruit, nuts/ seeds and oats

ONE light meal, including some vegies, healthy carbohydrate and lean protein, eg:

- chicken, couscous and salad
- vegie soup with grainy toast and cottage cheese
- eggs or beans on toast

ONE main meal, eg:

- spaghetti bolognese with vegies
- chicken curry with vegies
- roasted lamb with roasted vegies and greens
- vegie-packed stew or casserole
- grilled or steamed fish, sweet potato and salad

ONE OR TWO small snacks, eg:

- fruit and low-fat yoghurt
- wholegrain toast with light peanut butter

Other tips:

- Sit down for 10 minutes each week with your shift schedule and look at the week ahead.



Make a rough plan of what you might eat and what you need to buy, so it is easy to shop, even if you are tired.

- Make sure the meal you have before you start your shift is packed with as much nutrition as possible. If you are working a night shift this will probably be a healthy dinner at home, then take a light meal and one or two light snacks to work and have breakfast when you get home. If you are working an early morning shift, you might try a protein-packed smoothie before you go, take a main meal and a snack with you and have a light meal or bowl of cereal when you get home.
- As tempting as it is to dose up on caffeine, overdoing it isn't helpful. Instead, keep your fluids up with skim milk, green tea, peppermint tea and water.
- If you find yourself picking, chew sugar-free gum or drink water. If you can, brush your teeth during your breaks - this can help break the cycle of eating out of boredom.



PHYSICAL LABOUR

Those who have active, physical jobs, face the challenges of being out all day, working over mealtimes or being stuck on site with limited cooking facilities and easy access to junk food and sugary drinks. The easy option is to grab food on the go. But eating that way makes it harder for your body to work efficiently and it's more likely you will end up crashing when you get home. To avoid fatigue and get the most from your day, eating right is essential.



SOLUTIONS

- Pack an esky or bag full of healthy supplies for the day; containing:
 - one or two bottles of water
 - two pieces of fruit
 - a healthy lunch - leftovers, sandwiches, frittata, meat loaf, wraps, stuffed pita pockets or leftover stir-fry
 - one or two healthy, filling snacks such as cereal bars, soups, hard-boiled eggs, dried fruit & nut packs or tubs of low-fat yoghurt.
- If your job is very physical, you are likely to be burning lots of energy every day. You need healthy, high-energy snacks to help keep you going. Keep these on hand at work:
 - a bag of oats and a packet of sultanas - if you have access to a microwave, porridge is a super-healthy breakfast or snack
 - a healthy muesli bar or nut bar (minus the choc coating!)
 - cans of soup, baked beans, or spaghetti, and tins of tuna, salmon, sardines or mackerel
 - tubs of fruit in juice
 - nuts and dried fruit
 - liquid breakfast drinks
 - fruit bread (to toast at work)
 - high-fibre bran muffins
- If you do have to buy food, head to the supermarket and get ingredients to build your own sandwich: bread rolls, shredded chicken or lean meat

from the deli, and salad leaves. Or try ready-made tabouli; or green, pasta or roasted veggie salads from the deli section, then add shredded chicken.

- At the bakery, choose bread-based items instead of pastry (they are likely to be lower in fat). Opt for a filled roll or sandwich made with grainy bread.
- Choose water whenever possible and avoid sugary drinks. Sports drinks are only for those doing very heavy labour who sweat heavily (particularly in the summer months). Sports drinks can have as much as 14 teaspoons of sugar in a bottle and as many kilojoules as a chocolate bar.

» TIPS FOR TRUCKIES

Eating unhealthy food every day when you're in a sedentary job is a recipe for weight gain and heart problems. Like shift workers, truckies need to avoid the temptations of unhealthy food on the road by planning ahead and taking enough food for your journey. For those days when the plan falls apart:

- At the service station, buy low-fat yoghurt, chilled fresh fruit or cheese and crackers
- At the bakery, choose filled rolls or wholemeal/wholegrain sandwiches
- Keep a pack of muesli bars or other healthy snacks on hand (but out of sight).



STAY-AT-HOME PARENTS

With little ones constantly needing your attention, it is not surprising that many stay-at-home parents feel like raiding the kids' stash of sweet treats after a long day. Add the challenge of getting to the supermarket with kids, and it can be impossible to even remember to eat anything yourself, let alone eat something healthy.

SOLUTIONS


- Having the right food on hand is a great first step. See if you can work out a routine with a friend or a family member to look after each other's kids to allow you to get to the shops.
- If you just don't have time to go to the supermarket, online shopping can be a godsend.
- You need to eat well too - as a parent it can be so easy to put your kids first and forget about yourself. So as you are preparing meals and snacks for the kids, make yourself something at the

same time, even if it's just setting some soup out on the bench to remind you to eat it later.

Remember, kids learn a lot about food and eating habits from watching the way you eat.

- With a group of friends, make up a two-week meal planner together. By swapping recipes and easy meal ideas, you can expand your usual collection of healthy stand-by dinners.
- Buy items you can use for quick and easy meals: canned or fresh soups; eggs; pre-mixed salad leaves; tins of beans; parboiled

rice; healthy frozen meals; pre-cooked chicken or ham off the bone; low-fat cottage cheese and crackers; low-fat yoghurt, muesli and chopped fruit.

- While making dinner, think about the next day's schedule - what do you have on? Where will you be? Prepare extra food (like vegies) to take with you and place it at the front of the fridge where you can grab it easily. 



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- When the kids are having their afternoon tea, prepare yours at the same time and sit with them to eat it - you will be less likely to pick at theirs. For easy snack ideas try edamame beans - you can heat them up from frozen in the microwave - or homemade popcorn. It's low in kilojoules and great for kids, too.

- Keep up your fluids - it can be easy to forget about drinking water when you are super-busy. Set yourself a goal to make sure you are drinking enough throughout the day. Try having a glass of water every hour or each time you go into the kitchen, or aim to refill your water bottle two or three times each day.

- If you find yourself wanting a chocolate fix at the end of the day, try a low-fat chocolate mousse or a low-fat hot chocolate. Or for a different sweet treat, blend a large handful of frozen berries with low-fat yoghurt and a splash of skim milk.

STUDYING/UNI

Balancing a tight budget with a fluctuating workload, work experience and exams can mean it is easier to opt for two-minute noodles than planning and cooking a healthy meal. But when you need your brain to work at its best, eating well is a real priority.

SOLUTIONS

- If you live in a share-house, encourage your flatmates to plan meals for the week together. Planning ahead can save you heaps of money and time.

- Bored with eating the same five meals every week? Start a share-house cookbook. Try out new recipes (www.healthyfoodguide.com.au has heaps of recipes for under \$3.50 per serve) and if the recipe is a hit with the whole house, add it to your share-house cookbook. After a few weeks, you will have a variety of tasty and inexpensive recipes that you know work for everyone. This makes planning your meals and writing your shopping list for the week a lot easier - and cheaper.

- When you are studying, it's easy to get the munchies and start picking at food in the cupboard or reaching for sweet treats. Rather than nibbling on junk food, try:

- a bowl of high-fibre cereal with skim milk
- a handful of unsalted mixed nuts and wasabi peas
- a banana blended with skim milk and a teaspoon of honey.

- Keep well-hydrated. When you are bored it can be easy to mistake thirst for hunger.



Instead, get into the habit of putting the kettle on for a cup of green tea or herbal tea.

- If you can't concentrate, rather than reaching for a coffee or energy drink, get some sunshine and fresh air for 10 minutes.

A short brisk walk is enough to clear the brain fog and help you focus - far better than loading up on sugar and stimulants.

- Oats are cheap and perfect for breakfast or a snack when you're hungry. Add them smoothies to make them more filling.

- Rather than reaching for deep-fried 2-minute noodles, try couscous. It is as easy as boiling the kettle. Stir through a can of flavoured tuna or salmon and a chopped tomato for a quick, cheap and healthy snack.

- Buy canned fruit in natural juice (especially when on special) so you will always be able to have a healthy brekky or snack.

- Eggs make a great meal or snack - have them boiled, scrambled or poached on wholegrain toast or make an omelette or frittata with veggies.

- Check out the frozen foods section. Frozen veggies, sweet potato chips and fish can make a quick meal. You'll often find items on sale, too. **hfg**

