Company Intranet Blog

Let them eat cake…sometimes – Navigating the office diet and eating healthy at work

Anyone who works a nine-to-five job in an office setting knows that staying on track with healthy eating habits can be a huge challenge! Between doughnut-laden breakfast meetings, birthday celebrations and pizza parties, it's no wonder why maintaining a balanced office diet is difficult.

The reason many people fail in their attempts to maintain a healthy diet is because they do not know *how* to eat healthy and stay committed to a healthy eating plan at work. Since we spend a lot of time at work, we are more tempted to grab the fast foods, which are not necessarily the healthiest foods more frequently. Dining out regularly with co-workers, parties, stress eating or eating it just because it's there can cause us to make bad food choices. But eating heathy at work does not have to be hard, if you are willing to learn how.

Follow these 10 tips to help you get healthy and stay on target.

Eat breakfast at home. Because most breakfast foods from fast food restaurants are fattening and not nutritious, it is important to eat breakfast at home, or bring your own breakfast to eat at work. A healthy breakfast provides the energy that is required for your body to function efficiently at the start of the day, and it also makes it easier for you to control your diet. If you do not eat anything in the morning,

you may have difficulty controlling your hunger, and you could end up overeating or eating unhealthy food, which can result in unwanted weight gain. Because breakfast is an essential meal, you should try your best not to skip it.

Reduce coffee intake. Coffee is one of the most commonly consumed beverages in the workplace, because it has an energizing effect. However, it can be detrimental to your health because it contains caffeine, and can also be high in calories when it is consumed with sugar and cream. Since coffee is addictive, you may have trouble cutting it out completely, so try to drink just one small cup a day, and do not add sugar and cream if possible. Instead have a cup of warm lemon water which can rejuvenate your skin, hydrate your body and speed up your metabolism.

Eat a healthy lunch. Many restaurants offer great salad and healthy food options these days. Keeping a list of restaurants that are near your home office or Sentry with healthy options can help you stay on track with eating healthy without giving it much thought. It's also a good idea to bring you own lunch from home. A healthy lunch should include low-sodium meats, vegetables and whole grain foods.

Don't eat at your desk. Eating at your desk encourages mindless eating, and because you're most likely multitasking and not paying attention to the amount of food you're eating, it's the perfect recipe for overeating. If you must eat at your desk, don't make it a habit. Focus on what and how much you're putting into your mouth and be careful not to overdo it.

Drink more water. Drinking lots of water is good for your health, and it can also help you overcome hunger. Thirst can many times masquerade as hunger, making it harder for you to stick to your healthy-eating plan. If you feel hungry while you are at work, just drink a glass of water, and your food cravings will significantly diminish. And, if you have a craving for sugary sodas, drink your favorite flavored sparkling water instead.

Distribute your meals. Working can make you feel hungry, and you may often find yourself eating anything that is available in or around the office. One way to check hunger is to distribute your meals throughout the day. Instead of having a heavy lunch, eat half the portion at lunch time and the other half 2 or 3 hours later. Just make sure you check your portion sizes each time you eat.

Pack your meals and snacks. If you bring healthy snacks to work, you do not have to eat fast food to suppress your hunger pangs. Pack a small cooler each day full of fresh fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains. It's good to bring a variety of options so that you can eat what sounds good to you at the time and the extras come in handy if you have to work late. Remember, preparation is key when it comes to eating right at work.

Find weight-loss allies. We all know how important it is to have a weight-loss buddy in our social lives, and the same holds true at work. Weight loss or healthy-eating buddies provide a powerful combination of support, accountability, and motivation. A healthy eating partnership or a group weight-loss mission can dramatically increase your chances of success. Tell your closest co-workers about your commitment to stick with a healthy diet and invite them to join you.

Back away from the vending machine. If you struggle with buying junk food or soda from the vending machines at work, commit to avoiding them altogether. If possible, try not to walk by the vending machines at all. If you have to pass by them, don't look at them, and walk quickly past them. You might even consider not keeping loose change or bills in your wallet so that you won't be able to buy from the vending machine in a weak moment. Regular vending machine visits can ruin your healthy eating plan, avoid it. Out of sight, out of mind!

And if you must eat unhealthily… Indulge in your absolute favorites when you are really craving a treat, or there is a special event is going on, but be sure to keep your portions in check. Eat slowly and fully enjoy the experience, but afterwards, get right back to your usual healthy eating plan.

Special occasions tend to come up quite often at work, but you don't have to fall into the trap of indulging at every "special event". Practice, politely saying, "no, thanks" when you don't want to eat something – as we all know, it will always be somebody's birthday in the office!