



Lady of America Newsletter – August 2010 – Work & Exercise

Eating: Weight and the Workplace

Is your job – whether it be in an office or home-based – derailing your weight loss efforts? According to Weight Watchers Research Department’s Science Center, “a growing body of scientific evidence suggests that there is a definite connection between weight and work.”

According to the Science Center, “Many worksite environments have become more sedentary over the years and this has an effect on weight. For example, one study found that the more time employees spent at their desks, the greater their odds of being overweight. The number of hours worked also doesn’t help. A 2005 study published in the International Journal of Obesity found that men and women who worked the most overtime also boosted their odds of gaining weight.”



Work definitely presents challenges for everyone. For home-based workers, the challenge is often staying out of the kitchen. At the office, food and celebrations – birthdays, anniversaries and holidays – go hand-in-hand. Then there’s the co-worker who bakes chocolate chip cookies every week, or the secretary who has a jar filled with chocolate, and let’s not forget the vending machine.

“I believe that the temptation to indulge or over-indulge comes from needing our emotional tanks filled, said Sofi H. Matz, a licensed mental health counselor and a dance movement therapist. “It generally means that you need some social stimulation with others.”

The office is certainly a trigger for a lot of people as stress, egos and tempers can flare, causing emotional eaters to hit the vending machines or lobby food stores. The celebrations give way to make the excuse of “It’s OK, I can have this, I deserve it.” And for home-based employees or those with little or no interaction at the office, the sense of being alone can make food a good friend. “Before you head into the kitchen or grab a few cookies or some candy from a co-worker, ask yourself what your intention is for eating this,” suggested Matz. “It’s a self-check that makes you stop and evaluate your choice, and it also forces you to look at food not as a treat but as nourishment.”

Here are some suggestions as to how you can battle the bulge at the office:

- Start each workday with a good breakfast.
- Brown bag your lunch. If you work from home, plan out your meals ahead of time.
- Plan your snacks.

- Drink plenty of water and tea throughout the day.
- Move more. Keep a stability ball, resistance bands and weights in your cubicle or office and every few hours get up and do some exercise and stretches.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Use a headset to talk on the phone and walk around while on your calls.
- Use a pedometer to track your steps. The daily aim is 10,000 steps.
- Don't eat lunch at your desk. An American Dietetic Association report found that 75% of workers eat lunch at their desks at least two to three times per week, which can lead to mindless eating.
- Break up the lunch hour – a half-hour to eat and a half-hour to walk around the neighborhood or run an errand on foot.
- Eat every three to four hours, but don't hit the vending machine or the cookies! Keep healthy snacks like nuts, fruit, peanut butter, yogurt and low glycemic power bars in your desk drawer or low-fat yogurt in the company refrigerator.
- If you know there is going to be a celebration with cake and ice cream, bring your own dessert. Look for the Weight Watchers frozen desserts, Vitalicious muffins and brownies, or bring your own little fruit bowl topped with a dollop of whipped cream.
- If your company offers it, join a workplace wellness program or let your co-workers know you are following a healthy lifestyle so they won't tempt you.
- Encourage co-workers to fill their candy jars with lighter options like pretzels or dried fruit

Snacks on the Go

Tempted by the office treats? Are you always on the go and don't have time to stop for a healthy bite? Are you a home-based worker who finds herself wandering through the kitchen during the day? To help you stay satisfied, try keeping healthy snacks on-hand for those times when life gets too hectic. These foods will help curb your appetite and keep you far away from the freezer, the vending machine or the fast-food line.

- Natural unsalted almonds and walnuts
- Fruit and vegetables
- Instant oatmeal packets
- Whole-grain crackers and pretzels
- Natural nut butters
- Hummus and whole wheat pita

- Low-fat cheese or cheese stick
- Fat-free cottage cheese
- Air popped popcorn
- Tuna packed in water
- Lean turkey slices
- Hard boiled eggs
- Sugar-free Jello and pudding

Visit www.ladyofamerica.com for additional articles.