

Health and Wellness

News You Can Use

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Creating a healthy food environment at home and work

You can make it easier to eat better with a few small tweaks to your plans and surroundings, both at home and work. The world in which many of us live makes choosing healthy food very hard and choosing unhealthy food very easy. It's an environment that can eat away at health lifestyles and promote obesity. Here are some ideas for improving your food environment and promoting better health.

Planning ahead is key

Preparing menus and grocery lists ahead of time can keep you from making impulse food choices that often aren't healthy. With a little planning, you can make the healthy choice the easy choice.

- **Plan out one or two weeks of healthy meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner.** Take a few minutes over the weekend to go through your favorite healthy recipes and map out your meal plan. Update your go-to list as you come across new recipes, and don't be afraid to try new things!
- **Use a grocery list or meal-planning app with a grocery list feature.** This will help you quickly grab the ingredients you need for your healthy meal plan.
- **If your work week is crazy, cook over the weekend and store pre-portioned meals in the fridge or freezer.** This can be a time and money saver! Just thaw and reheat for hassle-free lunches and dinners.
- **Cut up fruits and vegetables and keep them handy in the fridge,** or pre-pack individual servings for



when you're on the go. You'll have ready-made healthy snacks and meal ingredients at your fingertips.

At home - making your food environment work

Here are three tips for setting up a home food environment that supports you and your family:

1. **Don't shop when hungry or emotional.** If you lack willpower when shopping for food, part of creating a supportive food environment would be not shopping when you're hungry or inclined to self-soothe with food (i.e., you're sad, bored, angry, anxious, etc.). Another technique is to develop the habit of making a shopping list ahead of time and absolutely sticking to that list. Our decisions are more likely to be in line with our long-term nutrition and health goals when we don't make them on impulse.
2. **Keep healthy food more visible and accessible** (fruit bowl on the

table, clear containers of cut up veggies front and center in the fridge). If you have high-calorie food in the house (healthy or non-healthy) that you tend to eat more of than you need, keeping it where you can see it makes you vulnerable to mindless, impulsive eating.

3. **Keep trigger foods out of sight.** A trigger food is a specific food that sets off a course of overeating where control is lost. The most common trigger foods are calorie-dense, highly palatable foods that are often combinations of sugar and fat (e.g. ice cream, cookies) or fat and salt (e.g. nuts, potato chips, French fries). You can allow these foods in the house - it's okay to enjoy them in moderation - but keep them out of sight in a lower cupboard.

At work - support healthy eating habits

There are times when it can be challenging to eat healthy at work. Between co-worker birthday parties, catered lunch meetings, breaks at the local coffee shop or bakery, vending machine temptations and a time crunch to get out the door in the morning, healthy eating at work can fall by the wayside. During the workday, it's important to stay fueled, energetic and focused so you can produce quality work - and there are plenty of ways that you can make this happen.

Bring healthy snacks to work

As part of your meal prep for the week, ensure you have healthy snacks on hand. This will help satisfy hunger during the day, and you can even make a full lunch of snacks if you'd

like to. It's easy to whip up a batch of hummus for the week, or bake homemade bread.

It's helpful to have a stockpile of shelf-stable snacks you can keep at your desk throughout the week, like nuts, seeds, dried fruit or granola, along with a stash of snack items you can leave in the fridge so you don't need to bring them with you every day.

Here are some food-storage tips for healthy snacking at work:

Store in or near your desk

- Whole grain crackers
- Dried fruit
- Juice box
- Rice cakes
- Cereal
- Granola bars
- Peanut butter
- Canned fish
- Canned fruit (in water or light syrup)

Store in the fridge

- Whole grain bagels / Bread
- Bran muffins
- Low-fat yogurt
- Cottage cheese
- Fresh fruit
- Raw vegetables
- Low-fat cheese
- Milk
- Salad greens

On the Road

- Baby carrots
- Celery sticks
- Bagel bits
- Rice cakes
- Apples
- Whole grain crackers
- Low salt pretzels
- Nuts

Start a lunch club

What if you could cook one lunch, yet eat a new home-cooked meal every day? It's possible to lighten your lunch load by assembling a lunch club with your co-workers. Here's how it works: collaborate with four of your colleagues who are interested in eating healthy at work. Each day, someone takes a turn making lunch for everyone else. So, for example, if your day is Monday, you make five lunch servings and bring them for the rest of the group, then someone else is in charge of Tuesday, another colleague on Wednesday, etc. This can be a wonderful way to experience different homemade recipes and flavors, with less work.

Recipe

Healthy recipe: Veggie prep bowls for work

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked chickpeas
- 1 cup quinoa
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 tsp sea salt
- 1 large English cucumber
- 24 cherry tomatoes
- 1 small red onion
- 7 oz cubed feta (200g)
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp tahini
- 2 Tbsp honey
- 8 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Sea salt
- Black pepper

Directions

1. Cook quinoa as instructed on package or cook it in the Instant Pot by preheating the instant pot with the "sauté" button, then once hot add a splash of oil and the quinoa and toast it for a couple minutes. Then, add water and sea salt, and immediately put on lid and seal. Make sure the venting knob is set to sealing. Press "cancel" and then "manual" and set the Instant Pot to 1 minute on high pressure. Then wait for natural pressure release (about 15 minutes).
2. In the meantime, wash and cut vegetables and divide all ingredients in 4 parts and add to 4 large bowls.

3. Prepare salad dressing by mixing lemon juice, tahini, honey and olive oil in an airtight container and shake until well combined.
4. Once quinoa is cooked, let cool and then divide into 4 parts and add to bowls.
5. Immediately refrigerate and take 1 bowl to work with about 4th of the dressing. Add dressing to bowl minutes before eating.

Source: Green healthy cooking

