



Health-Full Eating & Nutrition



Meal Planning for Your Workday

Eating While at work

If you've considered all the different ways time can be rendered at work, then you've acknowledged how elusive eating can be. Eating at work can be difficult with the ebb and flow of some office environments. Some people only eat breakfast, some might only eat lunch, and some might only eat dinner. We often have other responsibilities at work that steal our focus such as prepping for a last-minute project or needing to address one more email. How do you prioritize eating while at work? Meal planning can help curb the affects from work dynamics and improve the quality of your meal-time at work.¹ Simply put, meal planning is intentionally preparing meals to take with you somewhere.

Meal Planning & Intentional Eating

Eating at work is not always intentional because there are conveniences that most of us don't have at home like vending machines, office potlucks, and even the café. This can lead to passive eating and an increase in low nutrient foods due to the attention the day requires. When eating becomes

this way, it can act contrarily to the strides you may have already made or keep you from beginning to improve your nutrition. The control and peace food prepping gives you is superlative to any passive eating done at work.¹ Meal planning can definitely help you be more intentional about eating, whilst being less mentally occupied about what and when you're going to eat.

Why Meal Plan?

Eating out of the home is associated with a higher consumption of less nutritious calories and micronutrients.¹ Also, working more than 40 hours a week was found to be a barrier related to eating healthfully consistently.² It is hard to find time to make quality food because we are so tired. Throw in parenting and a spouse for some and it can really be a challenge.



Meal Planning Strategies

If you're finding yourself having a hard time intentionally eating while you're at work, try the following strategies to help meal plan for the day:

1. Pick food you enjoy and can eat frequently. For example, I eat eggs and don't get tired. There are plenty of quick and easy ways to make them too, and they're very nutritious.
2. Consider foods you already have to justify future grocery shopping, cut costs, and maximize convenience. Once it's time to restock you'll have an opportunity to stock your pantry with foods you are more likely to eat.
3. Once you find a recipe, consider the cooking resources you have at your workplace (microwave-ovens, refrigerators, etc.) and cook as much of your meal as you can at work.
4. Consider packing options and mix as much food as you can together to simplify packing, eating, improve flavor, and increase nutritional

density (otherwise make separate containers depending on the dish and personal preferences).

5. Consider the flow of your day and plan when you will eat so it does not get forgotten.

Main Take Away

Passive nutrition can be detrimental because it can lead to reaching for whatever is close and convenient. Maintaining and improving nutrition always comes down to being less about the quantity of food you eat and more about the quality of the food you eat. Reaching for convenient foods most of the time is like gassing your car up to only $\frac{1}{4}$ of a tank every time you get gas. If that's all you have to work with, you'd have to drive very conservatively because you can't go far. It is the same for your body, if you don't fuel it with quality fuel (nutrients & calories), you won't be able to go very far (with health & fitness) without being very conservative.



MONDAY



TUESDAY



WEDNESDAY



THURSDAY



References:

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22106948>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3464955/>