



ONLINE COVERAGE

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Don't let WFH play havoc on your waistline

By - Shikha Desai | Created: Aug 31, 2020, 13:46 IST |   



You're on a team call and somehow you've walked straight into the kitchen. Next thing you know, you're eating chips out of a packet. Or you were so caught up with work all day that you failed to realise that you neither moved from your desk nor ate a thing all day. Or perhaps "I'll have a few biscuits as I work" idea turned into accidentally eating the entire packet.

"Keeping your nutrition and activity levels under check can be tough when your office is your home. You are too comfortable and there's plenty of food available. And unlike in the office, you're free to graze all day and the fridge is all yours. However, this can wreak havoc on your waistline, sabotage your fitness plans and definitely impact your productivity negatively," says integrative health expert Khushboo Garodia.

WFH and its impact on our eating habits

Blurring lines between personal and professional life and lack of routine can lead to unhealthy eating habits, especially bingeing on junk food, snacking at odd hours and being inactive while working through our screens. "It's been five months since I am working from home and erratic schedules have become a norm for me due to the ongoing lockdown. I often seem to lose track of time when I am working and eat as well as sleep at odd hours," says engineering professional Akshay Shetty. "In the current scenario, many WFH professionals wake up much later than usual and have the added responsibility of household chores. With laid back schedules, they end up spending more hours working on projects that could be done on faster timelines while in office. This impacts timelines for daily chores and delays meal times which can in turn mess up the circadian rhythm of the body," says Dr Mitul Thakker, Chief People and Compliance Officer, IKS Health.

Cope with erratic schedules

It's not just what you eat, but when you eat that affects your health. "Having irregular meal times disturbs our natural body clock, leaving the body confused regarding when to expect its next meal. Eating at wrong times doesn't let insulin do its job effectively, leading to glucose getting stored as fat. Moreover, erratic meal times can also lead to eating large portions of food at one time," says holistic nutritionist Pooja Bhargava. When erratic meal times become a habit, it causes acid reflux, flatulence and headache. "In the long run, these little issues result in bigger health problems like hypertension, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, thyroid," says nutritionist Aayushi Lakhapati. Hence, as working professionals, we must strike a balance and chalk out a timetable in order to incorporate healthy habits as part of our lifestyle. "An effective solution for this would be to follow the pre-covid routine, substituting the travel time with housework, and to adhere to this schedule, thus correcting the irregularities in eating and working hours," suggests Thakker.

Make time to move

Experts say that for every 5 minutes of sitting, one must move for 30 seconds minimum. "With long hours of work, it is important to make time for a workout- it could be an hour of yoga, resistance bands, or basic functional training workouts in the comfort of your home," says Delnaaz T. Chanduwadia, Chief Dietitian, Jaslok Hospital . If you form a routine and include recreation along with exercise as a part of it, you will be able to follow a healthier and balanced lifestyle. "The best way to do this is to set goals on a weekly basis and work towards achieving these goals. Also, more companies should opt for apps and platforms that help monitor employees' fitness routines and promote health and wellness in a big way. Moreover, this will encourage employees to share health and fitness tips as well as their struggles with each other and result in a positive, encouraging working environment," says Thakker.

BOX:

Healthy snacking options for people working remotely

- Nuts and seeds trail mix
- Vegetable sticks or lavash with hummus or guacamole
- A bowl of flavoured yogurt
- Boiled eggs
- Avocado on toast
- Dried figs and dates
- Olives
- Fox nuts or makhana
- Sprouts with chopped veggies
- Corn and bean salsa
- Tomato bruschetta
- Popcorn
- Slice of cheese
- Handful of peanuts
- Roasted chana or chickpeas

- A piece or two of dark chocolate
- Smoothies with oats and fresh fruits
- A bowl of seasonal fruits
- Homemade baked veggie chips
- Homemade protein bars
- A glass of buttermilk

Quick tips for avoiding weight gain when working from home

1. Restrict your caffeine intake and increase your water intake
2. Have a fix time for sleeping & waking up
3. Eat your meals at set times every day
4. Plan your meals in advance
5. Maintain a diet and an activity log. This makes you feel accountable for your actions.
6. Don't eat your lunch in front of the computer. Taking a break will help you focus on your food and avoid overeating.
7. Take a short walk around your house every hour and do some quick stretching exercises.
8. Make sure your breakfast has a good amount of protein as it keeps you full and keeps your sugar levels balanced.

YOUR MEAL TIMETABLE

Irrespective of your place or nature of work, you should have a fixed meal routine that a body adjusts to.

4 meals a day (breakfast, lunch, evening snack and dinner, all equally spaced out).

Breakfast - Within an hour of waking up. Ideally between 08:30am – 09:30am

Lunch - Between 12:30pm – 01:30pm

Evening snack - Between 4:30pm – 05:30pm

Dinner- Between 08:30pm – 09:30pm

Beverages like lukewarm lemon water, buttermilk, turmeric water, herbal tea, green tea, coffee, kahwa, etc. can be consumed between meals.

EXPERT SPEAK

Make your breakfast the largest meal of your day and use smaller size plates for snacks and dinner. Avoid eating after your evening meal, keep yourself active and busy in some games or activities to reduce those hunger pangs or cravings

- Dietician Garima Goyal