



tips for making food choices while working from home



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Working from home has its many challenges. When it comes to nutrition, many find that easy access to the kitchen leads to a free-for-all. Here are some tips you can follow to help you make mindful nutrition decisions while working from home.

follow a schedule

Following a schedule not only helps promote productivity, but it also establishes regular meal and snack times. Scheduling meal times promotes balanced, regular eating throughout the day for consistent energy, helps you avoid distractions and eat more mindfully at mealtimes, and helps halt mindless grazing throughout the day. Below is an example of a schedule that might work well for certain individuals...

- 8 am - Wake up and get ready for the day
- 8:30 am - Breakfast
- 9 am - Work
- 10:30 am - 10 minute walk or stretch break + AM snack
- 12 pm - Lunch
- 3:30 pm - 10 minute walk or stretch break + PM snack
- 5:30 pm - Workout
- 7 pm - Dinner
- 8:30 pm - Friend/Family Time
- 10 pm - Read or journal
- 11 pm - Lights out

prioritize sleep

Working from home might mean we get to sleep in, but this shouldn't be an excuse to stay up all night scrolling through social media. Our hunger and satiety is influenced by our quality of sleep. In other words, the less sleep we get, the hungrier we feel throughout the day and the stronger our cravings. Practicing good sleep habits will not only help improve energy levels, but also prevent mindless snacking. Try some of the following habits to help you get high quality sleep...

- Go to bed at the same time every night
- Keep your bedroom dark and cool
- Limit evening screen time
- Avoid daily naps longer than 30 minutes
- Use a fan or white noise machine
- Avoid excess alcohol and large meals before bed

keep meals simple

Simple, no-fuss meals are a useful strategy to decrease stress in the kitchen- especially when groceries are limited. Prepare simple meals that are quick, easy, and familiar to make cooking a less daunting task. This will help you choose nourishing, home-cooked meals over takeout or say, an entire bag of chips for dinner.

Need some ideas or inspiration?

- Check out our shelf-stable recipe videos at uclahealth.org/sports-performance/stay-at-home
- Connect with Paige on Instagram: @paigefooteforward
- Connect with Paige via email: paige.foote@teamexos.com

set up "zones"

Whether we're aware of it or not, our minds respond to visual cues. When we see an add on our computer, we're reminded that we need to purchase XYZ. When we see the clock strike A, we're reminded that we need to perform B task. This also applies to food. When we see our refrigerator, we may be tempted to open it, even when we're not hungry. When we see a bowl of candy on the counter, we may be inclined to grab a handful.

This is why setting up zones can be handy. Even if you live in the smallest of shoeboxes, you can set up zones for certain areas. For example,

- Office/Desk: Work zone
- Bedroom/Bed: Sleep zone
- Living Room/Couch: Relaxation and fun zone
- Kitchen: Cooking and eating zone

Sitting at your work zone should be a cue to send out an email. Sitting at your relaxation zone should be a cue to pick up your favorite book. Sitting in your cooking zone might be a cue to fix a snack, even when you're not hungry, which is why you should avoid working or relaxing in that space.

focus on four key meal factors

Certain components of a meal or snack can make or break whether or not we'll feel hungry again 20 minutes later. Including the following key factors can help us stay fuller for longer, and avoid frequent trips to the kitchen.

- **Protein:** Protein, healthy fats, and fiber are all digested slowly in the digestive system. This means they stay in our gut for longer, thus helping us feel satisfied until our next meal or snack. Easy protein sources include hard-boiled eggs, string cheese, yogurt, canned salmon or tuna, and plant-based sources like bean dips, edamame, or trail mix
- **Healthy Fats:** Easy sources of healthy fats include plant sources such as nut butters, avocados, or hummus
- **Fiber:** Easy sources include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes
- **Satisfaction:** A meal should be both nutritious *and* tasty. One of the biggest struggles people experience when trying to eat healthier is the satisfaction element. A plain, dry chicken breast with steamed broccoli pales in comparison to a juicy burger and french fries. But a flavorful, colorful curry or burrito bowl may be more exciting. Experiment with different recipes, cooking methods, seasonings, and toppings to make the meal enjoyable and exciting. This will help you walk away from the table satisfied, instead of later searching through your cupboards for a way to satisfy a craving.

give yourself some grace

It's important to remind ourselves that we're doing the best we can with what we have. This new schedule may take some time to get used to, your food selection may look a little different, and you may need to experiment to find what schedule and eating habits work best for you. Choose to stay positive and look ahead and instead of dwelling on past mistakes.

As always, don't hesitate to reach out to Performance Dietitian, Paige (paige.foote@teamexos.com) for help. Never forget that we're in this together, and our team is here to support you.