Healthy Habits = Workplace Productivity

1. Increase physical activity. There are several things you can do to add physical activity to the workday.
   • If your workplace has several floors, take the stairs instead of the elevator when you can. Start with one or two flights and add more as it gets easier.
   • Schedule exercise on your work calendar and treat it like an important meeting. For example, plan to take a walk during your lunch break a few times a week.
   • Find opportunities to stand up. Stand each time you take a phone call. When you need to talk to a colleague in the same office, walk to their desk instead of sending an email or calling.
   • Keep simple equipment and a pair of exercise shoes at work. With a set of resistance bands or light hand weights, you can do arm curls during the day or between meetings.

2. Practice mindfulness. The concept of mindfulness is simple, but becoming a more mindful person requires commitment and practice.
   • Take deep breaths. Breathe in through your nose to a count of four, hold for one second, and then exhale through the mouth to a count of five. Repeat often.
   • Stop multitasking. You can be more productive at work if you complete one single task at a time and limit the time you spend trying to complete several things at once.
   • Take a break from the computer. Take 15–20 minutes to eat and enjoy your food away from your computer and phone. A cognitive timeout will improve your work and help you to feel better.

3. Celebrate! Celebrations are a part of office life, but they don’t have to hinder your health.
   • If you have an office potluck or party, offer low-calorie, low-sugar options like fruit and sparkling water for everyone to enjoy.
   • Small changes can make a difference. The benefits of shifting from white bread to whole-wheat bread, or from soda to seltzer water, add up.
   • Remember, every food and beverage choice is an opportunity to move toward a healthier eating pattern.

4. Plan and prepare. A little planning and preparation go a long way to eating healthy at home and at work.
   • Plan time on the weekend to batch cook and prep meals and lunches for the upcoming week. Precook items that can be reheated for a quick meal after work; cook rice and grains; dry beans; wash and trim vegetables and salad ingredients; roast a tray of vegetables and potatoes; make a big pot of chili, stew, or soup to freeze for future family meals and packable lunches.
   • Pre-portion the week’s work meals into freezable and microwavable containers.
   • Even if time and energy are short, you can still eat healthy. If your budget allows,
buy foods ready for assembly such as precut vegetables and fruit, prewashed bag salads, diced meat or precut chicken, and precooked meats, such as a rotisserie chicken.

5. **Control portions.**
   
   Portion sizes have continued to grow over the last couple decades, and as a result, so have our waistlines. Here are a few tips to prevent portion distortion during the workday:
   
   - Eat from plates, not packages, boxes, or bags. Snacking or nibbling from a package may cause you to eat much more than you think. Pre-portion your own single-serving snack packs at home to control amounts.
   - If eating lunch out with co-workers, consider splitting your order or taking half your meal home for supper or the next day’s lunch.
   - Use smaller plates and bowls. A meal served on a lunch plate rather than a dinner plate looks like more food.

6. **Enjoy water and fiber-rich foods at work.**
   
   - Consider adding salad and/or broth-based soup to your lunch. Consuming this as the first “course” before any meal is both filling and satisfying and will decrease the number of calories consumed after that.
   - Replace larger portions of high-calorie snack and lunch foods (sugary or fatty foods) with lower-calorie, high-fiber, and high-water content foods like fresh fruits and vegetables.
   - Make half your meal fruit and vegetables.

7. **Include lean protein foods during your workday.** Think outside the box and get creative with protein choices for lunch and snacks.
   
   - Include protein in your lunch to keep you satisfied throughout the workday.
   - Vary your protein choices from red meat, poultry, and fish to include beans and legumes. Hummus, nuts, and seeds are great protein options.
   - Choose a variety of whole grains, including quinoa, which is high in protein.
   - For office meetings that include snacks, consider hummus with veggies or unsalted pita chips, or trail mix with nuts and dried fruit.

8. **Choose healthy beverages.** Beverages can quickly help or hinder your health efforts, so think about what you’re drinking at work.
   
   - Stay hydrated with water. Keep a water bottle at your desk. Consider adding flavor with citrus slices, berries, cucumber slices, or fresh mint.
   - Healthy drink options include low-fat or fat-free (skim) milk, plant-based beverages, and unsweetened coffee or tea.
   - Avoid sugary drinks, sports drinks, iced teas, and soda as they deliver a lot of added calories and little to no nutrition.

9. **Create a healthy work environment.** Be a role model for your co-workers.
   
   - At meetings or events where food is served, have healthy food and beverage options available.
   - Work with a vending company to offer healthy options.
   - Encourage co-workers to get a walking buddy and walk with during breaks.
   - Consider walking or weight loss team challenges at work. Check out Penn State Extension’s Everybody Walk program at [extension.psu.edu/everybody-walk](http://extension.psu.edu/everybody-walk).
   - Download “Meeting Well: A Tool for Planning Healthy Meetings and Events,” a guide from the American Cancer Society, from [acsworkplacesolutions.com](http://acsworkplacesolutions.com).

**Sources**


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