

# Healthy meals on the go

It is important to eat well when you are at work.

This leaflet will provide some ideas on how to make healthy meals to take to work.

## Building a healthy lunch

It can be very easy to forget to stop for a drink or even for lunch when busy at work. However in order to feel fit and ready for work it is important to make time to eat healthy meals and drink plenty.

Base your meals on the Eatwell Guide seen below.



Remember when planning any meal including one to take to work it should contain foods from the main food groups seen above. These are: Starchy carbohydrate (CHO) foods, protein foods, fruit and vegetables and dairy products.

**Starchy foods** contain carbohydrates (CHO) these will provide you with energy. Aim to include a starchy food that you like as the basis of your meal.

Keep your favourite bread sliced and ready in the freezer so you can make your sandwich quickly. Other starchy foods such as Pitta bread, wraps, bagels and rolls can be frozen to give you more of a choice when making your meal for work.

Don't forget to ring the changes, crackers, rice or oat cakes are all good choices and add variety. You could keep a box of crackers in your desk drawer.

If you like pasta, couscous, rice, quinoa, couscous or potato these can be cooked the night before to make up in to a salad with vegetables or even left overs. You can also buy microwave sachets of ready-made meals based on rice, quinoa, spelt or similar. These can again be good standby options and useful to have in your office drawer to use on busy days.



**Glycaemic Index:** In order to feel full for longer you should use foods with a low glycaemic index. All starchy foods are broken down in the gut to release glucose and other simple sugars. These are absorbed in to the blood stream where they are taken up by the cells and used for energy. The rate at which foods are broken down and absorbed have been compared on a scale called the glycaemic index. Foods which have a high glycaemic index will be quickly absorbed but may also leave the blood quickly. More complex starchy foods such as wholegrain and seeded varieties of bread and foods like nuts will have a low glycaemic index.

### Choosing lower GI foods may help you to:

- ◆ Feel full for longer
- ◆ Control blood glucose levels
- ◆ Improve insulin sensitivity
- ◆ Lose weight
- ◆ Lower blood lipids
- ◆ Reduce the risk of heart disease

### Add a tasty protein filling

We all should have a portion of protein at our meals. This could be meat, fish, cheese, eggs, beans, nuts or pulses. Items such as tuna, cottage cheese or hummus can be bought in single portions with added herbs, vegetables or spices. These could be eaten with crackers if you are in a hurry to grab a meal before you leave for work.

If you like a warm meal you could choose soups with beans, lentils or meat to make a filling meal with bread. Beans on toast is also a quick filling option.

## Fruit and vegetables

Everyone should aim for 5 - 9 portions of fruit and vegetables a day. You could take chopped raw vegetables as crudités such as carrot sticks, celery, cherry tomatoes and have with dips such as humus or guacamole. Box up a salad or pop in some cherry tomatoes, sliced peppers or olives for variety.

**Remember a portion of fresh fruit / vegetables is 80g or roughly a handful**

Add in fresh fruit to be eaten whole or chop up a selection of fruits. Dried fruit can be good for a snack such as raisins, mango, apricots, plums, figs or dates.

**Remember a portion of dried fruit is 30g**



## Dairy foods

Dairy foods provide a good source of calcium, needed for healthy bones. As we age we lose calcium from our bones. Maintaining a good intake of calcium will help prevent osteoporosis, when combined with weight bearing exercise. We need 2 – 3 portions of dairy food a day, e.g. a piece of cheese the size of two thumbs, 150mls of milk or small pot of yoghurt.

If you have room for anything else at lunch, you could add some dairy products such as yoghurt, fromage frais, ready-made rice pudding or custard or a bottle of plain or flavoured milk. Low fat varieties contain the same calcium as the full fat versions.

## Fluids

It is important to drink plenty of fluids through the day. If you become dehydrated you may develop headaches and are likely to have poorer concentration. In addition you are more likely to develop urinary tract infections and constipation. Aim to have 8 – 10 drinks spread out through the whole day; more if it is hot or you are sweating.

**Food Safety:** Remember to keep your lunch cool. Use a cool bag or ice block. Place in the fridge as soon as possible at work.

Do not store next to a radiator.

Hot meals can be brought in food flasks.

## Top Tips for healthy eating on the go

Make packing up lunch as quick and easy as possible:

- Try making an extra portion or two of meals such as chilli and rice, pasta bolognese and place in a plastic food box in the fridge ready to take and reheat the following day.
- Keep a few cans of soups, baked beans and ravioli in the cupboard. These can be taken to work and easily heated in the microwave. Add some bread and a piece of fruit to balance the meal.
- Cold choices - mini cans of tuna in spring water or pots of hummus together with crackers and salad make a quick meal too. Keep a packet of crackers in your desk drawer.
- Vary meal choices as much as possible to avoid repetition and boredom as well as ensuring good nutrition.
- Protein – try a chicken drumstick with the skin removed, a chunk of cheese the size of your 2 thumbs, a mini can of tuna in spring water, a small individual pot of hummus, wafer thin meats or Quorn.
- Carbohydrate – don't forget the different bread choices to avoid boredom e.g. soda bread, sourdough, granary, seeded, cheese and tomato or walnut bread. Bread can be exchanged for wraps, bagels, English muffins, pittas, flatbreads and crackers.
- Fruit and vegetables – aim to include 2 handfuls of fruit and vegetables to add 2 portion of your 5 A Day.
- Dairy Foods – add a portion of cheese, a pot of yogurt, fromage frais or custard) and or a carton of milk. Read the food labels to make healthy choices
- Try to keep treat foods to one small portion e.g. slice of malt loaf or small biscuit. Try to avoid adding both crisps and a sweet treat.

Contact details:

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