

Why Is Nutrition Important In The Workplace?

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WE ARE WELLBEING

We might think of workstation assessments to prevent a bad posture, or heavy lifting training to avoid injury, but have you thought about what access your employees have to good nutrition in the workplace?

What we eat also has a place in a healthy workplace, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) found that optimal nourishment can raise productivity levels by 20%. Being able to sustain focus and concentration and energy levels need nourishment beyond coffee and biscuits!

There are numerous lunchtime situations which distort the choices available at work. Whether your employees commute into the office, are out on the road or find themselves choosing what to pick up at lunchtime nearby, the office culture can play a big part in individual food choices.

Office Spaces

Do your staff bring in cakes and sweets for birthdays and on return from holidays? Do you provide an endless supply of biscuits in the tea room? Serving up sandwiches or pizza for lunch meetings? Mark social events by going to the pub? The culture around nutrition in the workplace is not an area where employers have traditionally given much thought to.

Thankfully that is now changing, otherwise the place of work can unwittingly contribute to staff not functioning at their best. Not only that, it can contribute to more serious conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure, type 2 Diabetes. In a recent [article](#) in The Times "Cake in the office should be viewed like passive smoking, obesity expert warns",* Professor Susan Jebb, chair of the Food Standards Agency highlighted somewhat controversially the connection between food and health.



Whilst some would argue this is impinging on individual choice, the evidence suggests that it's much harder to stick to good nutrition in the workplace when we are surrounded by a culture that suggests otherwise.

Feeding Productivity

What we have for breakfast can either set us up well for a focused and motivated day. However, on the contrary, it can promote poorer eating habits through unstable blood sugar, insufficient protein and healthy fats. Some may not feel hungry first thing, eat on the go, or rely on caffeine until lunchtime. Typical choices of cereals and cereal bars can be full of hidden sugars even when marketed as 'healthy'. Indigestion and heartburn are common, with eating on the go hugely contributing to these symptoms.

Do your staff members have options for breaks to avoid eating at their desk? Are there enough storage, fridge and microwave facilities for staff to bring in their own food? What are the lunch options nearby? Are there any options beyond a sandwich meal deal or fast food? Are there catering facilities on site? If so, when was the menu last reviewed for nutritional content?

Are there options for visiting healthy food provision for staff to try new foods, or would they know what healthy options on the go are?

Making Time To Eat

We might feel more productive working through our lunch break, but taking adequate breaks is essential for productivity. More so, engaging with our food through our five senses is essential for long term health. Do you encourage staff to take their lunch breaks or is their workload preventing this?

Finally if your employees are going home to the 'Just Eat' app, ordering take out or stopping off for ready meals because they're too exhausted to cook, then there's a good chance their bodies and brains are lacking in vital nutrients or being impacted by hidden fats and sugars. What is the wider conversation around health going on in your workplace beyond what the legislation accounts for? Employees are hungry (pun intended) for information about how to help themselves prevent and improve their quality of life, and healthy employees are happier, calmer, more engaged, sleep better and get sick less often. Why wouldn't you invest in better nutrition in your workplace?