

## **Workplace Lunch Breaks: Where and what do I, Eat?**

Once again, you have not prepared to bring food from home for lunch. You are board of eating out of the vending machine because you have just about eaten everything in there except the cream filled cakes that take seven years to mold. You have exactly one hour to eat something and understand that eating greasy, fat latent or sugary lunches either puts you in a coma at your desk or instigates multiple trips to the company restroom. As a nutritionist of 18 years, I constantly answer questions about how to eat healthfully in a pinch at work when an employee has limited time and a sack lunch is not an option. So where and what do you eat for lunch that has some semblance of nutrition? The following will give you healthful tips on choosing quality lunches in a short time while at work.

Your first safe bet is the local grocery store, most of the time you have access to cooked chickens, premade salads or even salad bars. Additionally, large grocers most often have delicatessens whereby made to order wholesome lunches are available. Examples of lunches include carved turkey sandwiches on whole grain bread with olive oil and vegetables versus mayonnaise, processed cheese and pressed turkey meat. Other examples are pre cut raw vegetables and low fat dips, fresh fruit salads and sometimes steamed vegetables. Depending on the grocer, a person may have access to prepared meals such as salmon, rice and broccoli. Other choices include frozen organic entrees that you can purchase and throw into the microwave at work.

If you are fortunate to have a health food store close to the office, this is your bonanza in guaranteeing a healthy and nutritious lunch. Most health food stores are similar to your regular grocer as far as offering nutritional choices for lunch but they also offer more selection on organic foodstuffs. They present both premade and made to order lunches in addition to fresh frozen entrees. Other options include a plethora of wholesome food bars, smoothies, nuts, seed and fruit mixes. One can also purchase soup style consumables where the only need is hot water for a nutrient dense lunch alternative. If you do not have a grocer or a health food store available, then learning how to eat at a restaurant or fast food take out venue may be next for workplace lunch options.

Restaurant eating is tricky for time management purposes, punching in late after lunch does not "look good" to management. Mastering the menu and ordering right away when the server asks you what you want to drink is a good way to save time. If you are at a greasy spoon for lunch, there are no options for a nutritious meal other than the vegetables on your one half pound steer burger. Be smart and avoid the restaurants you know have no options when it comes to healthy alternatives. Most lunch menu's offer a variety of fresh salads. You have heard in the past to order dressing for salads on the side. I suggest just a carafe of olive oil whereby you measure the fat to one tablespoon and use either vinegar or lemon juice along with some pepper for a dressing. You can cut out more than 1000 calories quickly by following this one rule. If you do not want to be hungry within an hour after eating a salad,

add a chicken breast to sate your appetite. Ordering soups at a restaurant is dangerously high in sodium; instead, I suggest ordering steamed or grilled vegetables or baked potato. Skip the butter and add a small amount of salt and pepper to both. Usually a dine-in setting has more variety on the menu and offers anywhere from grilled or steamed chicken and fish to sandwiches made to order. Grilled fish, rice pilaf and a small salad with lemon and olive oil on the side is an easy lunch and if you do not like fish, order chicken.

Today, fast food options are better. One can order salads with low fat dressings at most quick visit venues. Order a grilled chicken sandwich on multigrain bread minus the mayo, cheese, bacon and have the server add extra lettuce, tomato and onion. Mustard is practically calorie free and adds flavor to any sandwich. If you have the option to choose a taco over a burrito, then do so. Corn has fiber and is a healthier option than refined white tortillas. If a burrito is your only option, then eat the chicken (stay away from beef) and order hot carrots and onions as a side. Grilled fajita pitas are only 150 calories per half serving and you can get grilled chicken, steamed rice and vegetables practically at any Asian fast food eatery. Most fast food restaurants specializing in chicken offer grilled chicken instead of fried, beans instead of fries and steamed vegetables and salad instead of cold slaw. Eating a nourishing lunch in a pinch in the workplace is simple if you educate yourself on these options versus eating unhealthy alternatives on the menu.

Deana Sicari BS CCN  
Clinical Nutritionist & Functional Athletic Trainer  
C/O The "NUTRI-FIT"  
760-940-4148  
[www.thenutri-fit.com](http://www.thenutri-fit.com)  
[deana@thenutri-fit.com](mailto:deana@thenutri-fit.com)