

HEALTH

([HTTPS://WEB.ARCHIVE.ORG/WEB/20240428160754/HTTPS://WWW.SUCCESS.COM/CATEGORY/HEALTH/](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/category/health/))

Working from Home? Skip the Junk Food and Opt for These Healthy Snacks as Fuel for Maximum Energy and Focus

BY

DANIELLE WINSTON

([HTTPS://WEB.ARCHIVE.ORG/WEB/20240428160754/HTTPS://WWW.SUCCESS.COM/AUTHOR/DANIELLE-WINSTON/](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/author/danielle-winston/))

UPDATED: APRIL 24, 2024
PUBLISHED: APRIL 28, 2024

 **BOOKMARK**

 **SHARE**



Working from home means comfort food is always available. It's too easy to grab a chocolate bar or a bag of pretzels after a Zoom meeting when your kitchen is footsteps away. Being at home also tends to blur the boundaries between work and your personal life.

You might be so busy that you work late or skip a meal and instead dine on espresso.

Your eating habits influence your emotions, energy level, cognition and mind-body well-being in infinite ways. Here are some suggestions for how to think of food as fuel to power your success.

How to think of food as fuel

It's common knowledge that whole foods are disease-fighting and processed foods contribute to inflammation and weakened immunity. But did you know that poor digestion can zap your energy and focus? According to gut and hormone expert Inna Melamed, Pharm.D., author of *Digestive Reset* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://amzn.to/3VUGTuO>), “poor gut health often comes [from] malabsorption (poor absorption of nutrients).”

Depending on your choices, your diet can either nourish and empower you to succeed or leave you feeling tired and depleted.

To help you stay on a healthy track, we've consulted with integrative health and medical experts for insights on how to maximize your daily eating habits. Keep reading for a handy nutritional timeline.

What's in your wake-up potion?

Do you practically stumble to the kitchen on autopilot in search of your morning brew? Keep in mind that half the caffeine from just one cup of coffee or tea takes four to six hours to leave your system.

Think about “start[ing] your day with water before you set off a cascade of neurotransmitters from the caffeine,” advises Dana Cohen, M.D., integrative medical doctor. While the mental upside of caffeine is feeling more alert and energetic, the downside of caffeine (<https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-979/caffeine>) is overstimulating your nervous system can include anxiety and increased heart rate.

Dr. Melamed recommends giving up caffeine entirely “to prevent blood sugar spikes and worsening of adrenal fatigue.” If you opt for decaf coffee, “make sure your decaf option is still organic and the process for decaffeination is [the] Swiss [Water] Process

[\(https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.swisswater.com/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.swisswater.com/). so no chemicals [are] used [that] then seep into your drink.”

Dr. Melamed prefers roasted dandelion or decaf green tea. Some other options she likes include spearmint, peppermint and hibiscus teas, as well as “adaptogenic teas like ashwagandha and Tulsi.” When consuming herbal infusions, always check side effects to ensure that they are safe for you.

If you’re not ready to forgo caffeine just yet, try cutting down on your intake and sip one cup as slowly as possible. Better yet, make that cup half decaf.

Breakfast food for fueling your day

Skipping breakfast isn’t a wise move in Dr. Melamed’s opinion—morning hunger is a sign that “your metabolism and your detoxification systems are optimized.” If you’re not hungry in the morning, Dr. Melamed recommends eating a lighter dinner earlier in the evening and exercising before breakfast to help you work up an appetite.

Roughly an hour after rising is the ideal time for breakfast, according to Dr. Cohen, who recommends having protein and good fats

[. \(https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/nutrition/ask-the-expert/avocado#:~:text=The%20type%20of%20fat%20in,know%20sources%20of%20monounsaturat](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/nutrition/ask-the-expert/avocado#:~:text=The%20type%20of%20fat%20in,know%20sources%20of%20monounsaturat) (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated) to promote energy and focus

[. \(https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/5-food-focused-ways-to-boost-your-energy/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/5-food-focused-ways-to-boost-your-energy/). “If you aren’t sensitive to eggs, they are the perfect breakfast food! Healthy fat and protein,” says Dr. Cohen. She also loves avocados for breakfast, which are a terrific source of healthy fats

[. \(https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/fats-and-cholesterol/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/fats-and-cholesterol/). “I add a little olive oil and real salt and throw an egg on top.”

Starting off with a carb-heavy meal like “cereal, pancakes, oatmeal or sweetened yogurt raises your blood sugar, which can be followed by a crash a couple of hours later [that] impairs focus, concentration, energy and productivity,” according to integrative physician Beth McDougall, M.D.

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/>)

Take a mindful lunch break to use food as fuel

No matter how busy you are, resist the urge to eat as you work. Create a dedicated time and space for lunch

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/taking-lunch-breaks-while-working-from-home/>). According to mind-body eating coach Susan Zilberman, eating with intention and attention is crucial—otherwise you may not even taste your food, much less feel satisfied.

“Notice the colors, flavors, aromas, temperature and textures,” and you’ll be able to realize when you’ve eaten enough, says Zilberman.

Slowing down helps with digestion

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://nutritiontherapy.com/the-importance-of-slowing-down-to-support-digestion/>) and can provide a more fulfilling experience. Take a few deep, calming breaths, relax your mind and make eating a mini meditation. Later, when you return to work, you’ll feel refreshed with renewed clarity.

When seeking balance, Dr. McDougall says it’s key to keep your blood sugar stabilized and not consume a heavy meal that taxes your digestive system. Seek out daily micronutrients from multicolored salads

([https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/salad-greens-getting-the-most-bang-for-the-bite#:~:text=They%20are%20rich%20in%20a,least%20nutrient%2Ddense%20salad%20green,.\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/salad-greens-getting-the-most-bang-for-the-bite#:~:text=They%20are%20rich%20in%20a,least%20nutrient%2Ddense%20salad%20green,.)) instead “What really keeps us alert and lights up our brains is the life force that living vital food provides,” adds Dr. McDougall.

Dr. Melamed also recommends eating vegetables for lunch and says that a large portion of cruciferous vegetables offers maximum detoxifying benefits. “Also, clean lean protein like organic chicken, wild caught fish... seeds, grass-fed beef [and] free-range eggs” are your source of amino acids and the building blocks of your system.

Fueling foods for snacking and the midday slump

Feeling blah after lunch? That late afternoon cold brew and gooey chocolate chip cookie might be tempting, but the caffeine and sugar boost won't serve your health later on. Also, be sure to drink enough water throughout the day. Dr. Cohen says dehydration is very often the cause of fatigue or brain fog.

According to triple-board-certified sleep medicine physician Funke Afolabi-Brown, M.D., be aware of the timing and quantity of caffeine; otherwise that afternoon cup might interfere with your sleep. Additionally, “high-sugar foods like candy and sugary desserts can lead to blood sugar spikes, disrupting your sleep.”

When it comes to snacking, “foods that are rich in sleep-promoting nutrients may help promote better sleep,” advises Dr. Afolabi-Brown. These include nuts and seeds that contain magnesium. Some other [magnesium-rich foods](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/15650-magnesium-rich-food)

[\(https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/15650-magnesium-rich-food\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/articles/15650-magnesium-rich-food) include bananas, spinach, black beans, [sunflower seeds](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/sunflower-seeds)

[\(https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/sunflower-seeds\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/sunflower-seeds), wheat germ, soy, cashews and [Brazil nuts](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/brazil-nuts-benefits#list-of-benefits)

[\(https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/brazil-nuts-benefits#list-of-benefits\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/brazil-nuts-benefits#list-of-benefits).

Instead of salty snacks, sweets or prepared trail mix, fill a jar with organic nuts, seeds, dried fruits and optional small amounts of dark chocolate chips. Limit your intake to a handful per snack break.

Dinner and self-care

The last meal of the day is your private time. Choose a space away from work to unwind. Dr. Cohen's idea of a healthy dinner includes “protein, vegetables and maybe something starchy like a potato, sweet potato or rice to stimulate some insulin, which helps the brain utilize L-tryptophan, which is helpful for sleep.”

Dr. Afolabi-Brown advises to “avoid eating about [two to three] hours before bedtime to give your body time to digest your dinner.” She also says to avoid eating foods that are high in saturated fats, as well as fried and spicy foods. On the flip side, foods that help lull you off to dreamland include complex carbs like whole grains, quinoa and brown rice—and healthy fats may help you sleep better.

Nurture your future and start choosing foods for fuel

Gradually, simple daily habits evolve into long-term changes. It's natural to reach for food to "soothe your stress, boredom, frustration and a host of other feelings," according to Zilberman, so she recommends instead performing a mental scan of your body to notice any signs of physical hunger. When it comes time for a meal, take notice of the healthy potential on your plate, and enjoy every delicious taste.

Photo by Marina Litvinova/Shutterstock.com

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/>)

SECTIONS

JOIN US

GET IN TOUCH

CONNECT

MORE



SUCCESS[®]

Unlock the Latest Knowledge that can Help You Achieve More in Life with More Confidence

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/>)

Copyright © 2024 SUCCESS Magazine. All rights reserved. **SUBSCRIBE NOW!**

([/web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/subscriptions-2](https://web/20240428160754/https://www.success.com/subscriptions-2))