



Workplace Snacks: They Can Really Do a Job on You

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For all those vowing to shed pounds in the New Year, skip the kitchen cleanout and turn your focus to a more insidious source of weight gain: Your workspace. It turns out, the office — where many adults spend the majority of their waking hours — is a bigger enabler of junk-food bingeing snacking than many people realize.

Just how big? **Consider that when Google's New York office replaced a glass jar of freebie M&Ms with dried fruit, their 2,000 employees collectively consumed 3.1 million fewer calories over a seven-week period.** (The M&Ms were relocated to a non-transparent container

In other words, people snack at work. A lot. And they're more likely to nibble on easy-to-spot sweets than those tucked away behind cabinet doors. In fact, in a workplace study done by Brian Wansink, director of the Food and Brand Lab at Cornell University and author of *Slim By Design*, people consumed an average of 2.2 more pieces of chocolate when the treat was placed in clear jars versus opaque, and 1.8 more pieces when the candy was located near their desk versus across the room. If there is a communal candy dish in your workspace, and coworkers are reluctant to swap chocolate kisses for kale chips, make sure it's on someone else's desk — and preferably in a non-transparent bowl.

An extra handful of candies as you pass a coworker's desk or a couple of cookies from the kitchen when you go to grab your lunch may seem harmless enough. But all those incidentals add up to a not-so-little sum. **According to one survey, people consume up to 700 extra calories a day through snacking alone.**

"Mindless munchies fly under our calorie goal radar and are the culprit behind weight gain or the inability to lose," says registered dietician Jennifer McDaniel of McDaniel Nutrition Therapy in Clayton, Missouri. **"People may eat portion-controlled meals,**



but then they eat two or three unplanned snacks that can easily add up to more than 500 calories a day."

If you're looking to give your workspace a healthy makeover for the New Year, think quality, not quantity. (As a rule, most high-quality foods have fewer calories, so the pounds will take care of themselves.) Get rid of excess sugar and salt, and replace processed foods with ones as close to whole as possible. (Choose an orange over orange juice, and apples over apple pie.) Sure, it will feel strange at first, but the good news is "taste buds are trainable," says McDaniel. **"Studies show you can decrease your preference for salty, fatty or high-sugar foods over time. The more you feed your taste buds something, the more they want it."** The less good news: It can take a full six months to re-train your brain to prefer healthier food options, according to a new study in the journal *Nature*.

Stock your workspace with nuts, seeds and trail mix as staples that won't go bad in a week and don't require refrigeration. Other easy-to-store snacks: Whole grain cereals and crackers, McDaniel suggests. Swap sweets for mints and candy bars for whole-fruit energy bars.

Right now, choosing a healthy snack is up to you. But one day in the future, you could have some help, thanks to a growing number of that are enlisting the services of alternative vending companies such as Fresh Healthy Vending and HUMAN, to deliver fresh produce, whole-grain crackers and low-fat yogurts in machines where chips, cookies and chocolate once reigned supreme. In the last year alone, these franchises expanded to include universities, hospitals, health clubs, YMCAs and tech startups across the country. Still to be determined: How much are people willing to pay for a fruit cup instead of a 99-cent candy bar?

Snack on this: When 3 p.m. rolls around, what'cha going to eat?

"For many people, our natural circadian rhythms leave us hankering for food between 3 and 4 p.m., or as I like to call it, the 'witching hour,'" says registered dietician Jennifer McDaniel. Your goal: Choose a snack with a mix of protein, carbs and healthy fats to keep you satisfied until dinner. Here are five picks.



- 1/2 cup of yogurt + 1/2 cup sliced fruit + 5 walnuts
- 2 whole grain crackers + 10 almonds + 4 dried apricots
- 1 banana + 1 tablespoon almond butter + handful of raisins
- 1/2 cup trail mix
- 1 slice whole wheat toast + 1 tablespoon peanut butter + drizzle of honey

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