



Eating sensibly when you are busy

Busy people

Do you find yourself rushing out of the house without any breakfast in the morning? Or grabbing a quick sandwich in the staff room for your lunch? Then getting home in the evening and being too tired to cook anything so resorting to a take-out or TV dinner?

If you're always eating on the go your body will never have time to digest food properly. This can lead to indigestion, bloating, heartburn or other digestive problems. When we relax, our parasympathetic nervous systems come into play, which facilitates digestion. If we don't relax then our bodies will struggle to cope with digestion. Similarly, if we don't take the time to chew our food, we are forcing our bodies to work harder to digest large lumps of food.

There are plenty of quick, healthy meals you can make - all you need to do is to get into the habit of taking a little more time over your meals. This will make a big difference to your digestion and also to your moods.

By eating properly you also help to strengthen your immune system to ward off infections like colds and flu, prevent energy slumps and irritability. Eating properly can keep your brain alert and your concentration levels high, and will leave you feeling ready to enjoy your evening when you arrive home.

If you don't have time to shop during the week, you can order groceries online and have your food delivered to your house, or you can do all your shopping for the week on the weekend. At first you may find this difficult, but after a few times, you will learn what combinations of foods you will need to buy.

Tips for quick healthy meals

See below for some tips on quick, healthy meals you can prepare or buy - and remember that whatever you make for your dinner, can be taken into work the next day as your lunch!

Breakfast

- Wholegrain toast with poached or scrambled eggs, or peanut butter.
- Unsweetened granola with milk, sprinkled with some unsalted nuts or seeds (e.g. almonds, hazelnuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds).
- Plain yogurt with fresh fruit and unsalted nuts.
- Oatmeal made with water and milk (this takes a few minutes in a pan, but can also be made in a microwave).
- Fruit salad, served with a little fresh orange juice and some plain yogurt.

- Smoked salmon and/or low fat cream cheese, or peanut butter on a whole wheat bagel - this can either be made at home, or bought from a shop if there is one en route to school.
- Natural smoothies are a quick, healthy way to get some fruit into you in the morning and also come with yogurt for a little bit of extra protein.
- There are some healthy snack bars on the market, containing fruit and seeds. Make sure you go for a low sugar variety.

Lunch or dinner

- Fill a tortilla with a grilled chicken breast cut into chunks and some roasted vegetables - put some chopped vegetables such as peppers or mushrooms on a baking tray sprinkled with olive oil and leave in a hot oven until tender.
- Whole-wheat pita bread can be split and filled with cottage cheese, chives and pineapple, or tuna and chunks of cucumber and salad.
- Pita bread can also be sprinkled with grated mozzarella and spread with a little tomato puree to make a pizza that you simply grill for a few minutes. Add whatever you like as a topping, e.g. ham and red pepper or tuna and olives.
- Homemade soups can be heated in the morning and put into a thermos flask, which will keep it hot until lunchtime; or you can buy ready-made soups and heat them in a microwave.
- Pita bread or rice cakes with hummus and a side salad.
- Often the leftovers from last night's meal can be used as a tasty lunch the next day. Leftover pasta can be mixed with tuna and corn to make a pasta salad; and rice could be mixed with kidney beans, chickpeas and tomatoes to make a tasty rice salad.
- For dinner, stews and casseroles are an easy option. You can buy ready-diced meat and fry it with some onions. Add herbs, vegetables such as carrots, zucchini, rutabaga and potatoes, then leave to cook for an hour or so until the meat is tender. This can be served with rice or bread, and the recipe can also be made with canned beans such as black, pinto or kidney beans. As this takes longer to cook you can relax for an hour while it's cooking, or get some chores done if you find it hard to relax.
- Risottos can also be quick and easy. You fry some risotto rice in some oil for a few seconds, then slowly add chicken or vegetable stock bit by bit, allowing the rice to cook. After a few minutes you can add some vegetables of choice (e.g. peas, chopped peppers or mushrooms) and some chicken or fish such as salmon. Mix in some grated parmesan and black pepper and you'll have a tasty meal.

Where can I find more information?

If you are concerned about your diet you could visit your family physician or a nutritionist for more information.