

Questions asked during the Healthy at Work Webinar Series – Curb Your Stress, Eat Well:

1. Is it true that if you stay away from high-fat or high-sugar foods then you are less likely to experience cravings for them?

One of the behaviour changes that are observed whenever people are under stress is craving high-fat and/or high-sugar foods, as well as an impaired ability to resist these tempting foods (otherwise known as “comfort foods”).

If you experience these changes whenever you feel stressed, it is recommended to keep healthy snacks on hand to help you deal with the cravings. Examples of healthy snacks include:

- Yogurt with fresh fruit
- Cheese with whole grain/whole wheat crackers
- Apple slices with peanut butter

A healthy and balanced snack includes **two** of the four food groups from Canada’s Food Guide, and emphasizes snacks with protein and fibre. Protein and fibre take longer to digest, so it will keep you full for longer.

2. Are low carb diets effective in the long term?

Not all low carb diets are equal, some are more restrictive than others, and some promote leaner meats and healthier fats while others permit foods such as bacon and processed meats. Following a low carb diet may help you lose weight in the short-term, but it’s mostly because you are overall eating less (less calories) and restricting the types of foods you eat. For many people, staying on a low-carb diet is difficult and will usually revert back to their old eating habits, thus causing them to gain the weight back. This is why these types of restrictive diets can be a poor choice in terms of long-term weight loss.

When it comes to long-term weight loss and management solutions, your best bet is to focus on lifestyle changes in eating and physical activity that you can adopt permanently. That is, the best “diet” you can choose is one you can stick with.

3. I find that eating fruit as a snack does not fill me up. What can I do?

A healthy and balanced snack includes **two** of the four food groups from Canada’s Food Guide, and emphasizes snacks with protein and fibre. Protein and fibre take longer to digest, so it will keep you full for longer.

If you find that eating a piece of fruit does not fill you up, consider adding variety to your snacks and increasing the portion. A healthy and balanced snack can be an important part of your overall diet because it will ensure you don’t get too hungry and overeat (or fall for “tempting foods”) at your next meal.

4. How many hours prior to sleep should caffeine be restricted?

If you are trying to cut back on caffeine, it is recommended to cut back slowly to avoid experiencing side effects including headaches and drowsiness (especially individuals who are used to having large amounts of caffeine).

People who drink caffeinated beverages usually start feeling the effects within five minutes and reaches its peak within 30 minutes. Normally, it takes around four hours for half of the caffeine consumed to be metabolized by your body. Therefore, to ensure that caffeine does not disrupt your sleep, avoid having caffeine close to bedtime. It is recommended to gradually have your last cup of caffeinated beverage closer to your start of the day to avoid sleep disruptions.

5. Is there an effective percentage of protein/carbs/fat/fibre to aim for during the day?

Following Canada's Food Guide is the best way to make sure you eat a variety of foods and get all the nutrients (protein, carbs, fat, fibre, vitamins, minerals, etc.) you need throughout the day. According to Canada's Food Guide, we should emphasize vegetables and fruit in our diets. For fibre specifically, it is recommended that adults eat 25-38 grams per day.

6. How many hours prior to sleep should you stop eating?

If you are truly physically hungry, then having a light snack before bedtime is OK. If you suffer from heartburn, it is recommended to avoid eating for 2-3 hours prior to going to bed.

The main issue to look out for is "mindless" eating. Some people will think they are hungry before bedtime because they are eating in front of the TV or computer without realizing that they are not actually physically hungry.

Get to know your body and your hunger cues, and if you are truly hungry before bedtime don't be afraid to add a light snack.