

# The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News & Views

Working from home is one of the most important ways to help flatten the curve. Whether you are self-quarantining or abiding by the government's shelter in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, you'll most likely be working from home for the foreseeable future. We all know working from home has its perks, but potential weight gain isn't one of them. Working from home means distractions like coffee breaks with coworkers and water cooler small talks are in the rearview mirror for now, but in the era of social distancing, one major work from home distraction remains the refrigerator. Have a deadline? Sure, but first, you should probably check on last night's leftovers. After all, you could use that extra brain food, obviously. And of course, you've already had breakfast and lunch, oh and your fair share of snacks. Being out of your usual routine, having constant access to food, and the combination of job stress, the uncertainty surrounding public health and having easy access to that refrigerator could be a recipe for disaster. If your eating has been erratic, here are a few strategies to help create some balance and consistency.

Successful freelancers swear by routines. Wash your face, brush your teeth, put on real cloths, eat a healthy breakfast, and set smartphone boundaries. Schedule your day like any other regular workday, with a lunch break, and a few smaller breaks throughout your workday. Without proper breaks what will you be? The answer, of course, hungry. And if you're hungry and surrounded by food what do you think you'll do? Yep, that's right, you'll eat. In addition to preventing mindless indulging, settling into a consistent routine will help regulate blood sugar and insulin levels, hunger hormones, mental and physical energy, digestive health, and even your sleep quality. If you're not eating on a proper schedule you are also putting yourself at risk of becoming HANGRY. Thus, putting your family members at serious risk also. With keeping this in

mind try picking a time that you plan to stop for breaks and lunch every day and stick to it. It gives you that feeling of control in a rather uncontrollable circumstance.

It's tempting to nibble while your typing, listening in on a conference call, or responding to emails. It's easy to think that eating at your desk could help you end the day early, but work from home veterans know it rarely works that way. Your focus dwindles without dedicated breaks away from your laptop. Eat all meals away from not just your desk, but your tech. It is important to hit the pause button on work, as well as your phone, TV, or any other diversion while you enjoy your meals. This again can help you eat more mindfully, and better tune into your body's hunger cues.

Rethink what you drink. Those that are new to the work from home lifestyle are often astounded by how much more coffee they drink at home. If you brew a pot, you don't want to waste any, so you end up drinking more than the communal office coffee pot. If you drink caffeine, have your coffee between 9-11a.m. Then yep, you're cut off. This is the best time to drink caffeine so that it doesn't interrupt your natural sleep cycle by triggering a shot of adrenaline to late in your day. I know we've all heard this before, and maybe you stuck to a water drinking regimen when you had a desk and a water cooler nearby. While working from home it is imperative that you maintain your hydration schedule so that you do not become dehydrated. Keep a water bottle next to you, and sip on it throughout the day. This will act as a reminder and helps avoid unnecessary snacking when you're mistaking hunger for thirst. When you don't drink enough your brain can confuse your body's signals making you think you are hungry when, in fact, you just need to drink. Avoid drinks that contain artificial or added sugar. Excess sugar can also throw off your

natural appetite regulation and stoke that dreaded sweet tooth.



It's easy to lose track of time when you're deeply engrossed in a project. Hours can pass by without you getting up from your workstation and that can be dangerous to both your mental and physical health. When you were in the office, you might've taken a jaunt around the office floor, popped your head into a colleague's cubicle to say hello, chatted with the mail person when you need a break. Once working from home, you don't have those routine built-in breaks surrounding you. It is important to break your gaze from your computer throughout the day, get up and walk around. However, walking back and forth to the kitchen doesn't count. Go for a walk outside. Say hello to a neighbour (maintaining social distancing, of course). Do a youtube workout. Be more intentional about your breaks. Plan ahead of time for how you plan to use the time. I like to set a 5-minute alarm and run around the house tidying, or do a quick ab workout, or better yet, crank up your favourite song and have your own dance party. Moving and stretching your body energizes the brain. Endorphins are produced when exercising, even just for a few minutes, which increases interest levels and better yet happiness. Get the blood flowing and you will return mentally refocused.

Working from home gives a lot of freedom, but it's almost too free. Without societal norms and cues from other coworkers, it's easy to become a savage beast and just gaze on those cheetos despairingly. When you work under your own steam, with lack of any real provisions, you have to trust that you are getting as much accomplished as you should be in hopes of maintaining your productivity, balance and

most importantly your sanity. It's essential to be mindful of what's happening in the world and the impact this has on the people you work with. As we cope with the effects of a global pandemic. Make an effort to be more aware of new challenges faced by those around you. It's especially important to ground ourselves by remembering to count our blessings and be grateful for our lives and any privileges we have, it is equally important for us to acknowledge that social distancing, quarantine, or isolation is hard. Go easy on yourself. This is an unprecedented time for all of us. However, we are resilient. We can adapt and we're going to get through this. Focus on balance to maintain mental and physical wellness, remain productive, and keep moving forward, one day at a time.

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