

Resist the temptation to snack while working, nutritionist says



Oranges and other fresh fruit are a great choice for healthy snacks, says K-State Research and Extension nutrition specialist Sandy Procter.

Make a conscious effort to avoid ‘crisis eating’

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MANHATTAN, Kan. – As more Americans work at home to stem the tide of the current COVID-19 pandemic, they are quickly learning that it's a whole lot more tempting to snack when the refrigerator is just a few steps away.

That, coupled with the stress naturally associated with the outbreak, can lead to unhealthy eating, says Kansas State University nutrition specialist Sandy Procter.

“As humans, we want to be in control and so when we need to cope, a lot of times we crisis eat. And for most of us, that’s just not a healthy pattern,” Procter said.

Listen to Sandy Procter on the radio program with Jeff Wichman at:
<http://soundlivingksu.libsyn.com/practice-mindful-eating-0>

“We might over-consume sweets, or over-eat in general. For some people, they may not eat enough, forget to eat or avoid food, or drink too much coffee and bombard their system with excess caffeine.”

Procter said there is a body of research indicating that people can consume an entire package or dish of food while distracted and not even feel full.

"If we are working at our home office and eating at the same time, we know that we can consume huge amounts of calories and not even realize that we ate," she said. "We have talked often about mindful eating: Eat when you're eating, and work when you're working. Just because now it's all in the same environment, doesn't mean you can successfully mix them all together."

Procter recommends buying healthy foods that can be re-packaged at home as pre-portioned snacks. Doing so is sensible for parents as well as for children who also are staying home from school these days.

"Keeping snacks a little bit controlled will probably serve us well in a number of ways," she said. "For one thing, people will be able to maintain that schedule of feeling hungry at meal time a little better. And you may not have to venture out to the store in the middle of the week to purchase a few more things. It helps if we can learn to be mindful of those extras and try to make them last."

In addition to planning healthy snacks, Procter recommends taking time for a few deep breaths, stepping away from the news now and then, and making a schedule to take a walk or get some other form of physical activity each day.

"If you're being active, chances are you're not mindlessly eating at the same time," she said. "It's a good way to break up the day and reinforce positive health habits.

"We aren't able to be in control of a lot of what's happening right now. When you think about all of the change that has been thrust upon families and individuals just in the last few weeks, it's all mind-boggling. So, taking the time to realize that there are still some things that you can choose and capably be in charge of, and that can help improve your situation, is one way we can feel just a little more in control of our own situation."

More information on family nutrition and health is [available online](#) from K-State Research and Extension.

Sidebar: Recognize when food is solely for comfort

K-State Research and Extension nutrition specialist Sandy Procter said it's important to recognize when food is becoming a comfort, rather than a need.

"I think of the old King Kong movies where a crowd of people is running off into the distance, waving their arms and screaming," she said. "We need to resist going there in our heads as much as possible."

"That means realizing that we really do have a choice when we go to the grocery store. Nobody is forcing us to buy the extra large container of unhealthy, empty calorie food. We are in control."

Procter suggested buying healthful foods that will satisfy a sweet tooth or a desire for a savory snack, and make you feel full, such as fresh or canned fruit; celery and peanut butter; and bulked goods, such as popcorn.

More health food tips are available online from the [K-State Research and Extension food, nutrition, dietetics and health program.](#)

At a glance

When the refrigerator and snack cabinet are close by, there's a temptation for most of us to eat more. Nutritionist Sandy Procter shares tips to avoid unhealthy eating.

Website

[K-State Research and Extension food, nutrition, dietetics and health program](#)

Notable quote

“If we are working at our home office and eating at the same time, we know that we can consume huge amounts of calories and not even realize that we ate...Eat when you’re eating, and work when you’re working.”

-- Sandy Procter, nutrition specialist, K-State Research and Extension

Source

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