



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Nutritional Science

NUTRITION FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE AND WELL-BEINGS IN WORKING FROM HOME SETTINGS

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Raveena Saharan

Ph.D Scholar Department of Food and Nutrition Shri Khushal Das University, Hanumangarh, Rajasthan.

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented changes to our daily lives, including a significant shift towards remote work for many individuals. While remote work offers flexibility and convenience, it also introduces unique challenges to employees' overall performance and well-being. Nutrition plays a crucial role in supporting individuals to excel in their remote work settings and maintain optimal physical and mental health. Furthermore, this paper identifies the essential nutrients and dietary guidelines necessary for remote workers to thrive. It emphasizes the significance of a well-balanced diet, incorporating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats, to sustain energy levels, boost cognitive function, and enhance mood and motivation. As working from home becomes the new norm, it is crucial to address the potential impact on nutrition and overall health. This review article aims to examine the nutritional challenges faced by people working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic and explore practical strategies to promote healthy eating habits and well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19, is a viral respiratory illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and has since become a global pandemic[1]. To get rid of this pandemic, in addition to various other precautions, individuals were advised to steer clear of crowded areas, refrain from traveling during peak hours, remain at home, and participate in remote work or working from home (WFH)[2]. After the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous daily personal routines underwent significant changes, giving rise to the idea of a "new normal" in various aspects of life. Companies swiftly embraced this "new normal" concept with a positive outlook, particularly in terms of adopting working from home (WFH) as a standard and sustainable way of operating, not just during the pandemic period but also in the post-pandemic future. Indeed, the shift to working from home (WFH) has brought both positive and negative experiences for employees[3]. Moreover, the transition to a WFH routine itself can impose physical and mental burdens on individuals[4]. As a result, many people experienced changes in their physical activity levels and eating habits. The disruption of regular routines, limited access to outdoor activities or exercise facilities, and emotional stress might have contributed to decreased physical activity for some individuals. Additionally, being at home more often can lead to changes in eating habits, with some people resorting to comfort eating or experiencing disruptions in their usual dietary patterns[5]. These changes in physical activity and eating habits can have potential implications for individuals' physical health and overall well-being. Therefore, it is essential to encourage healthy behaviors and provide resources to help people cope with stress and maintain a balanced lifestyle during such challenging times[6].

Musculoskeletal pain, issues rising from isolation, a closed space causes stress, depression, psychological and physiological fatigue, these are some occupational health problems linked to WFH. Working from home (WFH) has become a popular option for many employees, as it offers a wider variety of daily activities, less stress in the work environment, flexible working hours, more time with family and easier to maintain a better and healthier lifestyle[7]. It also highlights the importance of understanding lifestyle changes in the context of remote work, suggesting that WFH may no longer be a temporary phenomenon[8]. Therefore, we aimed to explore some outline of nutrition and some key points that well-being of people doing WFH.

Nutrients are essential substances that our bodies need to grow, develop, and function properly. They are obtained through the food and beverages we consume.

Macronutrients: These are nutrients required in relatively large amounts by the body and provide energy. The three main macronutrients are Carbohydrates that are the primary source of energy for the body. They are broken down into glucose and used by cells for various functions. Second is Protein, essential for building and repairing tissues, enzymes, hormones, and various molecules in the body. Last one, Fats, also known as lipids, they serve as a concentrated source of energy and are essential for cell structure, hormone production, and absorption of certain vitamins[9].

Micronutrients: These are nutrients required in smaller quantities but are equally important for various physiological functions. Micronutrients include vitamins and minerals. Vitamins are organic compounds that are essential for various biochemical reactions in the body. They support growth, immunity, and overall health. Minerals are inorganic elements necessary for a wide range of bodily functions, such as bone health, nerve function, and fluid balance[10].

A balanced and varied diet is crucial to ensure that one can get an adequate intake of all the necessary nutrients for the body's optimal function. Nutritional deficiencies or imbalances can lead to various health problems, while a well-balanced diet can promote overall well-being and help prevent certain diseases[11].

A study suggests that the WFH declaration period had a notable impact on dietary habits, leading to increased consumption of vegetables, fruits, dairy products, and snacks, while decreasing the intake of seaweeds, meats, and alcohol. These changes may have resulted from shifts in food availability, convenience, and social influences during the WFH period[12]. Another study suggests that working from home allows for more time to focus on household-related activities, such as cooking and spending time with family during meals. Additionally, the findings imply that teleworking may have the potential to positively impact the health and well-being of workers, particularly when it comes to dietary habits and nutrition. [13]. In summary, one research indicates that weekday steps declined during the declaration period, and this decrease in walking was linked to depressive symptoms. Working from home (WFH) might help reduce the risk, but it could also lead to extended working hours. The results reveal that an increase in working hours during the declaration period was linked to depressive symptoms. Employers and regulatory authorities should oversee employees' working hours and guarantee adequate rest periods to safeguard their health. Promoting consistent physical activities, interrupting sedentary time, and maintaining social relationships during the pandemic seem

to be advantageous for public mental health. [14]. A study said that WFH may have significant adverse effects on the physical and mental well-being of individuals[15].

Nutrition Tips for Optimal Health and Productivity While Working From Home

- With the rise of remote work and the increasing number of individuals working from home, it's crucial to address the impact of this lifestyle on nutrition and overall well-being. While the flexibility of working from home offers numerous benefits, it also presents unique challenges when it comes to maintaining a healthy diet. This article aims to provide practical and effective nutrition tips to support the physical and mental health of those who work from home. Some key points are mentioned below-
- Create a Balanced Meal Plan: Working from home allows more control over meals, making it easier to plan balanced and nutritious meals. Consuming a mix of macronutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, and fats) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) in each meal can help sustain energy levels and keep the mind sharp. Opt for whole grains, fruits, and vegetables as they provide a steady release of energy, avoiding the rapid spikes and crashes associated with simple sugars. Including sources like lean meats, legumes, nuts, and dairy products helps maintain satiety and supports muscle health, which is essential, especially if physical activity is reduced. Incorporating sources of healthy fats, such as avocados, nuts, and olive oil, can enhance brain function and help control hunger. Opting for nutrient-dense foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins ensures that the body receives essential vitamins and minerals for overall health. Consuming foods rich in vitamins C, D, and zinc can help support the immune system, which is especially important in times of increased susceptibility to illness.
- Don't Skip Breakfast: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, as it kick-starts the metabolism and provides energy for the morning ahead. Opt for nutrient-rich options like oatmeal, yogurt with fruits, smoothies, or whole-grain toast with nut butter.
- Stay Hydrated: Working from home may lead to distractions that cause to forget to drink water regularly. Hydration is vital for maintaining focus and preventing fatigue. Keep a water bottle nearby, and aim to drink at least 8 cups (64 ounces) of water daily.
- Mindful Snacking: Snacking is a common pitfall for people working from home. Avoid mindless munching and opt for healthy snacks such as nuts, seeds, fresh fruit, Greek yogurt, or vegetable sticks with hummus. Avoid keeping sugary or processed snacks within easy reach to prevent temptation.
- Set Meal Times: Establish fixed meal times as if one was going to the office. Consistency helps to regulate body's internal clock and prevents overeating or undereating due to irregular schedules.
- Limit Caffeine and Sugary Beverages: While coffee can be a productivity booster, excessive caffeine intake can lead to jitters and disrupt sleep patterns. Opt for herbal teas, water, or diluted fruit juices instead of sugary beverages to avoid empty calories.
- Take Breaks and Move: Sitting at a desk for prolonged periods can contribute to a sedentary lifestyle. Schedule short breaks to stretch, walk around the house, or do some light exercises. Movement not only aids digestion but also enhances mental focus.
- Minimize Distractions during Meals: When it's time to eat, step away from the workspace and minimize distractions like TV, smartphones, or laptops. Eating mindfully and savoring the meals can prevent overeating and improve digestion.
- Prepare Healthy Snacks in Advance: Spare some time during the week to prepare nutritious snacks or meals that are easy to grab during busiest time. Pre-cut vegetables,

portioned fruit, and homemade granola bars are excellent options[16].

CONCLUSION

This review article emphasizes the significance of nutrition in promoting the health and well-being of individuals working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Adapting to remote work requires proactive efforts to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle. By implementing evidence-based nutrition strategies, employers, health practitioners, and remote workers can collaborate to foster a supportive and health-conscious work environment, ultimately leading to enhanced productivity and overall satisfaction during these challenging times.

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