



by Tara Postnikoff

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Ask a Nutritionist

Q:

I have just returned from an active maternity leave to my office job where I'm seated all day. Although I eat conscientiously, I feel like I'm putting on weight. Are there things I can do to prevent weight gain?

A:

Going back to work after a maternity leave is a big change emotionally, physically and even nutritionally for new moms. Here are some tips to help with the transition.

Eat breakfast

Make sure you plan time to eat your own breakfast in addition to preparing your kids' meals. Protein-rich breakfasts—incorporating foods such as eggs, lentils, Greek yogurt, protein powder, or lean meat—will keep you fuller longer and reduce your urges for stimulants like caffeine and sugar.

Pack a lunch

Packed lunches are great for your wallet and your waistline. When you're cooking dinner, make a little extra to take as a balanced, healthy lunch for the next day, so you don't have to visit the food court. If you do have to eat out, choose wisely, especially since you are not as active as you may have been at home. Try for a protein source and veggies; think grilled fish and half a plate of roasted vegetables drizzled with a little olive oil.

Make time to eat

Make sure you set aside time in your work day to eat, away from your desk. When you make eating purposeful, you are more likely to recognize that you are eating and feel full sooner. If you aren't looking at what you are eating, sometimes your brain doesn't make the connection that food had been consumed.

Chomp on veggies

A mid-afternoon snack is a must for some, especially if you won't be having dinner four to five hours after lunch. Include

washed and cut vegetables when packing your lunch bag. They are rich in vitamins and minerals and offer loads of fibre. All that chewing will make you feel full, too. Pick a different favourite each day for added nutrient variety. It's really hard to overeat on veggies.

Drink water

When we get dehydrated, we don't think as clearly or perform well. Make sure you drink about two litres of water while at the office. If you're feeling tired, you might just be a little dehydrated. Try water or herbal tea before having a coffee, since those tasty spiced lattes have a ton of calories.

Get up and move

Sitting at a desk all day is not good for your posture, joints or muscles. Make sure you get up and move for 10 minutes out of every hour. Take phone calls while standing; make a point to walk the long way to the elevator; go see a colleague instead of sending an e-mail; or get up and do some light activity or stretching just to get the blood flowing.

Say thanks, but no thanks

In every office, there is that lovely person that brings in candy or cake for special occasions or even just for the heck of it. While a treat once in a while is all right, snacking on sweets daily may condition your body to expect a treat at the same time each day. Decline politely and you will feel better for it. **RR**