**Motivate Your Employees to Eat Better With the Real Food Challenge (Free Toolkit!)**

It’s no secret that what you eat greatly impacts your health. Your diet can either [fuel your body](https://www.forbes.com/sites/alankohll/2017/03/08/food-as-fuel-how-leaders-power-their-days/#6bf06ba02734) or drag you down. Consuming a diet that is mostly made up of “fake food” (or heavily processed food products) can harm your health with its excessive sugar, calorie, and fat content. By cutting back on fake foods and focusing on a diet filled with real foods, you can reduce your risk of chronic illness, feel more energized, and keep your body happy and healthy.

A new study published in the [British Medical Journal](http://www.bmj.com/content/360/bmj.k322) gave some new insight on the negative impact that ultra-processed food has on one’s health. A group of French scientists studied the diets of more than 100,000 people and found that eating ultra-processed foods (like cakes, chicken nuggets, instant noodles, and mass-produced bread) put people at a higher risk of developing cancer. A 10% increase in the amount of ultra-processed food consumed was linked to a 12% increase in certain types of cancers. The study also found that processed foods make up about 50% of the average person's diet in several developed countries – which could be contributing to the rising cancer levels.

An increased risk of cancer is just one of the many reasons why heavily processed foods can be dangerous to your health. A diet high in processed foods is also linked to obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and nutrient deficiency. This is why it’s important to strive for a healthy, balanced diet filled with more real foods and less fake foods.

To help your employees eat more real food and less fake food, we created the Real Food Challenge. This challenge isn’t about losing weight (although that is one great perk of cutting back on processed foods!) – it’s about feeling good and properly fueling your body. Replacing fake food with real food provides your body with the nutrients it needs to sustain a healthy weight, healthy mind, and healthy brain function.

This challenge considers “real food” as any food that is minimally processed or not processed at all. Fake foods include any heavily processed, packaged foods that include dozens of unrecognizable ingredients, chemicals, and additives. Employees are challenged to replace one fake food with one real food each day for six weeks (for example, replacing a bag of chips for a handful of almonds). This small change can lead to a permanent healthy habit that will help employees feel healthier and maintain a more balanced diet.

Some of the most important benefits of eating more real food include:

* More nutrients
* Healthy blood sugar levels
* Less added sugars
* More fiber
* Healthier skin
* Healthy fats
* Reduced risk of diseases
* More satiating

On the contrary, heavily processed fake food is terrible for your diet and overall health. Eating too much of it can have some serious health consequences. Here are some examples of why you should eat less fake food:

* Tons of artificial ingredients
* Added sugars
* Refined carbs
* Low nutritional value
* Addictive properties
* Less satiating

The Real Food Challenge toolkit is comes with six educational handouts, examples of read foods and fake foods, a promotional flyer and table tent, and tips to help employers promote the challenge among employees. Here’s a sneak peak of what you’ll find in the Real Food Challenge toolkit:

**Tips for Avoiding Fake Foods**

Since our world is filled with processed foods, it can be a bit tricky to avoid them. Grocery stores are filled with fake food products marketed as “health” foods. Not to mention, we don’t all have convenient access to Whole Foods or other health-food stores to shop at on a weekly basis. Our toolkit comes with some great tips for avoiding fake foods including:

* What to look for on ingredient labels
* Switching to 100% whole-grains
* Focusing on fruits and veggies
* Buying frozen produce
* Buying local produce
* DIY healthier alternatives to your favorite processed snacks

**Real Food Staples**

Focusing on a diet rich with real foods might involve re-stocking your kitchen and pantry, and it can be difficult to know where to start. By stocking up on some of these delicious [real food staples](https://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/14-food-staples-that-healthy-eaters-should-keep-in-their-kitchens), you can keep your grocery list simple and feel confident that healthy, nutritional choices will always be readily available whenever you’re hungry. Some examples include:

* Assorted fruits and veggies
* Plain Greek Yogurt
* Eggs
* Dried fruit
* Sweet potatoes
* Air-popped popcorn (100% whole-grain)
* Nuts
* Seeds
* 100% whole-grain products (bread, cracker, brown rice)
* Canned whole foods (black beans, corn, peaches)
* Extra virgin olive oil
* Herbs and spices

**Making the Real Food Habit Stick**

By the end of the Real Food Challenge, employees might need a bit of help getting the new habit to stick. While a six-week challenge is plenty of time to start [developing a healthy new habit](http://info.totalwellnesshealth.com/blog/make-employee-wellness-easy-7-ways-to-develop-healthy-habits), it might take some ongoing practice to make the real food habit stick for the long run. Some tricks and tips for making the real food habit stick include:

* Set realistic goals
* Make real food convenient
* Track what you eat
* Remind yourself of the benefits of real food
* Learn some new recipes
* Find a buddy
* Forgive yourself for any mistakes
* Celebrate success

The toolkit also includes some promotional materials for employers to use to encourage employee participation and get employees excited about the challenge. Download the your free copy of the toolkit [here](http://offers.totalwellnesshealth.com/real_food_wellness_challenge)!

The bottom line is that eating more real food and less fake food is an easy way to reduce calories, consume more essential nutrients, maintain a more balanced diet, and boost your overall health and wellness. Help your employees reap the benefits of real food by hosting the Real Food Challenge at your workplace.