How to avoid stress eating during times of crisis

Virgin Pulse

TIP SHEET

Working from home has its perks, but access to a fully stocked pantry and fridge should not be one of them.

As more employees work remotely because of the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, a combination of job stress, financial concerns, the uncertainty surrounding public health and having easy access to the refrigerator and pantry cupboard could prompt some workers to over-indulge more than they would otherwise.

It's called "stress eating" for a reason. A number of studies show that emotional or physical distress increases the amount of food we eat, particularly meals higher in fat, sugar or both. Anytime you're feeling particularly stressed out — whether it's at work or at home — and you're feeling aimless, human nature leads us to what's comfortable. Furthermore, not having to commute to work and the ability to wake up later can also throw off your mealtimes and otherwise established healthy habits.

WHY?

Sometimes people eat and drink in excess after they've gone through a major stressful event, like a divorce or losing a job or living through a pandemic. While stress and anxiety induced over-indulgence is not common but often temporary, it may have both short term and long-term consequences.

GOOD NEWS! Emphasis on daily healthy habits and focus on being active (step counts), will help keep the weight gain regrets away.

Stop Doing

Skipping meals: It disrupts your daily routine and may cause overeating at next meal.

Eating out of boredom

Keeping junk food in the house/plain sight: Easy access to junk food, packaged goods will test willpower and humans have limited willpower capacity - seeing a bag of potato crisps or a cookie in your line of vision makes it that much more tempting to get up and snack.

Drinking any alcohol during work hours: You wouldn't do it in the office so don't do it working from home.

Sacrificing sleep: Don't let daily duties and late-night activities get in the way of your sleep schedule.

Drinking when you feel stressed: Replace that drink with a healthy habit; go for a walk, do a home workout.

Focusing on negativity: Being tempted to partake in negative behaviours you might see on social media in response to crisis; use social media to connect positively with your friends/colleague.

Start Doing

Keep a food diary

Eat regular meals and snacks throughout day

Portion out food: Did you know portion sizes have increased up to 8 times in the past two decades? Try using a smaller plate which has shown to help decrease overeating.

Think about why you're overeating: Adhere to a regular eating schedule.

Stay hydrated: Don't wait until you're thirsty. Feeling thirsty indicates that you're already dehydrated. Carry a reusable bottle throughout the day.

Stock up on fruits and veggies for healthy snacks: A healthy daily consumption of fruits and vegetables can prevent cravings and keep you satisfied throughout the day.

Prep meals ahead of time: Beat any impulses to eat something unhealthy from the shelf by having food ready to go.