

**For your team's wellbeing.**  
**For Living**



# Healthy eating in the workplace.

Here, we'll look at how you can help your people eat healthier at work, from small nudges to bigger cultural shifts.



We all know that eating well is central to our health and wellbeing. But our actions don't always meet our intentions. Sometimes life gets in the way, on a busy, stressful working day it can be really hard to achieve that balanced diet.

Studies suggest that obese individuals take on average an extra four days' sick leave every year. So looking after colleagues' health will not only benefit them, but also your organisation. There are many things that employers can do to help their people when it comes to healthy eating. Some are big changes that may be a challenge to put in place. But there are also some little tweaks or nudges that will help colleagues to stay healthier at work.

**Obese individuals typically take an extra 4 days sick leave every year.**

Harvey SB, Glozier N, Carlton O et al. Obesity and sickness absence: results from the CHAP study. Occupational Medicine, 2010.

# What are the problems?

## Treats and snacks

It's fairly common place for people to bring in cakes and sweet treats for special occasions, or even just to boost morale. Some workplaces will have vending machines full of unhealthy items, or even just sweets freely available. Simply having these things in the line of sight will make people more likely to indulge and compromise their long-term health.

## Eating out culture

In some roles, eating out is almost part of the job description. Whether you're in financial services, law, or anything where keeping clients sweet is the name of the game, you'll be well used to an indulgent working lunch. Unfortunately most restaurant choices aren't the most healthy, and it's all too easy to find yourself on the wrong end of a three-course meal full of fat, salt and sugar. Seeking out the healthy options at a restaurant can be easier said than done, and some restaurants will be better than others.



**There are 227  
calories in a pint  
of 5% lager.**

Unit & Calorie Calculator. DrinkAware. [www.drinkaware.co.uk/understand-your-drinking/unit-calculator](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/understand-your-drinking/unit-calculator), March 2019.

## Drinking culture

Even more widespread than eating out culture, the Friday drinks can be almost sacrosanct in some workplaces. Alongside the well-known health risks of drinking, many alcoholic beverages are also high in calories, compounding the effects of a poor diet. A post-work drinking session might also make someone more likely to grab a 'quick and dirty' meal on the way home.



# What changes can I make?

## Treats and snacks

There's evidence to show that really simple changes to the environment can affect our eating behaviours. At Google's New York offices, employees were getting through a considerable number of the free sweets that were available. When they were moved into opaque containers – and healthy snacks displayed more prominently – this sweet consumption dropped. Google hadn't withdrawn the perk of free sweets, but had nudged their employees towards making healthier choices. Are there any similar things you could try in your office?

When someone brings in snacks or treats, could you put them in a cupboard, rather than on display, to encourage moderation? If you have an on-site caterer, could you speak with them about making similar changes? If there's a vending machine, see if this can be filled with nuts, seeds or protein bars, rather than high-calorie, high-sugar snacks. Discuss these decisions and changes with your colleagues and make a joint commitment to being healthier, rather than just 'imposing' the changes.

## Eating out culture

Do a bit of research on the restaurants near your office, and compile a shortlist of those with good healthy options. Encourage colleagues to give preference to these. Perhaps you could see if any of them could offer a discount for your company's employees.

**Find out more about healthy eating at [bupa.co.uk/health-information](https://bupa.co.uk/health-information)**

## Drinking culture

A drinking culture can be hard to reverse, but remember that if you're a leader or manager you'll be setting an example to others. By drinking sensibly yourself on an evening out, you'll help to set the right tone. You could see if there are any other ways you and your team can spend time together. Are there any leisure centres nearby where you could do a team sport? Or you could start a lunchtime walking club to get those step-counts up.



## Mental wellbeing

Stress is closely linked to eating behaviours. This means that those under considerable pressure at work may struggle to follow a healthy, balanced diet.

Employers are responsible for their people's health and wellbeing, and making sure that they're not at risk of long-term stress is a key part of this. Bupa has a wealth of information online about how you can support the mental wellbeing of your team.

**Find out more about supporting mental health in the workplace at [bupa.co.uk/workplace-mental-health](https://bupa.co.uk/workplace-mental-health)**

### Sources

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