



with Susie Burrell

Nutrition

THE desk DIET

Michelle was a slim size 10 when she started working as an executive assistant at a large law firm. She had just finished university, went to the gym for at least an hour each day and was always too busy to eat.

The new job was fabulous; her boss took her to work lunches, the other assistants were always inviting her to morning tea, and Friday-night work drinks were fantastic.

After three months at the new job, Michelle noticed she had gained five kilograms. What had happened?

As most of us spend more than eight hours a day at our workplace, it has a strong influence on the way we eat.

The office lolly jar, celebratory morning teas, the vending machine and an ever-increasing number of food

outlets selling delicious lunch treats are just some of the temptations we are exposed to during the working day.

When this extra eating is combined with sedentary office jobs and long commutes, slow, inconspicuous weight gain is often the result.

Food behaviourist Dr Brian Wansink has shown in food environment research that, basically, if food is there we will eat it.

One study found that individuals

who could see M&M's on their desk

through a glass jar ate double the number of M&M's than colleagues who had the chocolates under the desk.

So, if you think you can have a lolly jar staring you in the face each day and you will not be tempted, think again.

No-one is expecting you to be a purist, but it is helpful to understand the most common food traps at work and think about ways to manage them.

Keeping sweet treats out of sight is a good starting point; pack biscuits in cupboards and fundraising chocolates under the desk.

Allocate set times for morning and afternoon tea, and try not to eat in between times. Keep a supply of filling snacks, such as nut- and grain-based snack bars, cheese and crackers, and hot chocolate drink mixes handy, so when you are hungry you have something decent to grab.

**FIND A BALANCE**

Does there seem to be a cake every second day for someone's birthday or new baby? Suggest changing



back



the system: try allocating one day a month for all celebrations. Or when sweet, high-kilojoule treats are offered around, enjoy a few bites and throw the rest away. (Remember, the most pleasure comes from the first couple of mouthfuls).

The global recession may have slashed the entertaining funds of many large firms, but the work lunch remains a risky situation.

Lunches eaten out tend to double the number of kilojoules, as foods are heavier and often accompanied by extra sides and drinks.

If you find yourself eating out more than once a week, be strict and stick to light salads, soups and grills. Always order extra vegetables or salad, and have a light meal that evening in an attempt to compensate for the extra kilojoules consumed that day.

Being strict with your food intake at work may seem pedantic, but the reality is that we spend up to a third of our lives in the workplace, and bad health and fitness habits at work tend to translate into serious weight gain if we are not careful.



<i>Workplace kilojoules</i>	
<i>2 plain sweet biscuits</i>	<i>350kJ</i>
<i>1 slice banana bread</i>	<i>1000kJ</i>
<i>Large skim caramel latte</i>	<i>1000kJ</i>
<i>Slice of chocolate cake</i>	<i>1500kJ</i>
<i>Cafe-style muffin</i>	<i>1300kJ</i>
<i>200g pack of fundraising chocolates</i>	<i>4000kJ</i>
<i>2 slices garlic bread</i>	<i>500kJ</i>
<i>10 lollies</i>	<i>450kJ</i>
<i>Thai rice and meat dish</i>	<i>1600kJ</i>
<i>Takeaway pasta with pesto</i>	<i>3400kJ</i>



**FOOD TIP OF THE WEEK** If you are unsure why you are not losing weight, or even why you are gaining it, try calculating your daily kilojoule intake using CalorieKing, [www.calorieking.com.au](http://www.calorieking.com.au). The web-based program is free and can give you an indication of exactly how much energy, fat and carbohydrate you are eating each day.



**READER DIET MAKEOVER**

**NAME** Maria Frenchman **AGE** 58 **WEIGHT** 80kg **HEIGHT** 165cm **OCCUPATION** Part-time librarian **DIET GOALS** To help optimally manage my blood glucose levels

	<b>MEAL</b>	<b>SUSIE SAYS</b>
<b>breakfast</b>	Sultana Bran and low-fat milk with tinned fruit	Swap to a low-GI breakfast cereal such as oats or muesli for optimal blood glucose control throughout the morning.
<b>mid morning</b>	Low-fat cookies and coffee	A protein-rich snack such as thick yoghurt or cheese on wholegrain crackers would help lower blood glucose levels.
<b>lunch</b>	Tuna salad and 100 per cent fruit juice	Fruit juice is too concentrated for individuals with type 2 diabetes, so avoid it altogether. Add low-GI carbohydrates with beans or grain-based bread at lunchtime to avoid low blood sugar later in the day.
<b>afternoon tea</b>	Fruit or nothing	Add nuts to a snack of fruit to prevent getting over-hungry during the evening.
<b>dinner</b>	Stir-fry or grilled fish with salad	Aim for ½ to 1 cup of cooked, low-GI carbs with the evening meal for optimal glucose control overnight.



## PRODUCT REVIEW

Campbell's Country Ladle Wholegrain Minestrone has a great mix of wholegrain carbohydrates and protein, and is relatively low in sodium for a tinned soup. Enjoy half a tin with crackers and tuna or reduced-fat cheese for a filling, nutritious lunch.

## Reader question

**Q** *When is the best time to eat in the evening? I regularly get home from work late and sometimes don't eat dinner until 9pm or 10pm.*

**A** Ideally, we need 10 to 12 hours overnight without food, which means you should eat by 8pm at the latest. If you find yourself regularly arriving home late, try eating a larger meal at lunchtime and enjoying a small meal of salad, soup or an omelette later at night.

**EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:** [susie@susieburrell.com.au](mailto:susie@susieburrell.com.au). Due to the large volume of questions, Susie cannot respond personally to each one. Susie trained in both nutritional science and psychology and is one of Australia's leading dietitians. For more information visit [www.susieburrell.com.au](http://www.susieburrell.com.au).