

Is Your Job Making You Fat?

*By Lee Fairbanks
Keep Canada Slim*

As most people know, many modern jobs require long periods of inactivity, often sitting at a desk for hours at a time. But lack of activity is not the whole story on why your job is making you fat.

Other careers require extended periods of concentrated efforts which dictate your day's schedule, causing you to skip meals. Believe it or not, this work habit will also cause you to gain weight. In our consulting program we often run across these explanations as to why people can't eat properly during the day: "I'm too busy at work to stop and eat," or "I'm not allowed to take a break between lunch and the end of the day."

In both cases, their job or career is making them fat.

Consider this: a person can gain weight while eating 1500 calories per day; the same person can lose weight while eating 1500 calories a day – without any change in their activity.

The secret is in balancing meals – when you eat and how much you eat at each meal.

Let's say at 7:30 a.m. you eat a typical breakfast of cereal with milk and black coffee. You might consume 250 calories. If you have a quick lunch at 12:30, maybe a salad with fat-free dressing, yogurt and an apple; or soup and half a sandwich; you might eat 250 calories there. Then you get home after a 60-minute commute, take an hour to settle and make dinner, then eat a 1,000-calorie meal at 7:30.

Because you have eaten so little during the day, your body is in 'starvation' mode by dinner time, something we explained in our first column. In starvation, you will store pretty much all of that dinner. In addition, you can't burn off 1,000 calories before your next meal, so some of that storage is still there when you have breakfast the next day.

Compare that routine to this one: You eat a little more for breakfast – maybe add an egg and hit 300 calories. At 10:30 you have a low-fat muffin with low-fat cream cheese and an apple with your coffee – another 300 calories. At 3 o'clock you eat a whole wheat chicken wrap for another 300 calories.

When you get home, you're not that hungry, so you have a small plate of pasta with tomato sauce and some fresh chopped veggies at 7 p.m., adding another 300 calories to your day. About 10 o'clock you feel like a snack so you have that last piece of apple pie you've been saving for another 300 calories.

The difference with this meal plan is that it has kept your metabolism moving at a steady pace all day. You never go into starvation metabolism, so you don't store any of it.

Think of your metabolism as a fire. If you feed it wood regularly it will burn steadily, consuming the fuel, producing energy and leaving a little ash. On the other hand if you cut back on wood for extended periods of time the flame will die down. Then you dump three times the regular amount of wood on it and the flame is suffocated, causing incomplete combustion and leaving a lot of wood only partially burned.

That's the way it is with your metabolism. Feed the flames a steady flow of fuel and you will not store it. This is one of the key strategies we teach in the Keep Canada Slim program.