

No break for lunch at work could spell disaster, survey says

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By Sarah Portlock / The Star-Ledger



Photo by: David Gard/For The Star-Ledger

Caption: Nearly two-thirds of workers either don't take a break for lunch or eat at their desks, a new survey found.

Nearly two-thirds of employees either don't take a break for lunch or eat at their desks, according to a survey by the workforce consulting group Right Management.

But going without a break isn't just a bad idea. It could be affecting your health, work performance, and even hurting your chances of a promotion down the road, experts said.

The pressure at work can be relentless, but performance and productivity could go down if workers don't step away from the office, said Michael Haid, a senior vice president at Right Management. The online survey asked 751 North American workers if they regularly took a break for lunch.

"One has to wonder how many workers actually leave the workplace and get a chance to clear their heads, and what the downstream toll of lack of true breaks and downtime might be for employee well-being and overall organizational performance," he said.

"Employees may feel they have to apologize for stepping out, but in the long run this kind of company culture does not help improve performance or engagement," he added. Getting away for lunch can be a great way to get to know co-workers in a casual atmosphere, which can help when managers are looking to fill a position, said Tony Calabrese, a career coach with Absolute Transitions in Maplewood.

"More and more these days, people are going to find that in order for them to find that next job opportunity, they need to get to know others and network," Calabrese said. "Lunchtime is as good a time as any for that, and it is usually done in a casual, relaxed atmosphere."

Eating lunch while staring at a computer screen can also have nutritional risks, said Verena Visser Aibel a health and fitness coach in Hackensack. "If you're just sitting and always staring at the computer, wow — it has its toll," Aibel said. "You may not be conscious of what's going in your mouth."

It takes about 20 minutes for the brain to register when the stomach is full, she added.

"If you're eating in five to eight minutes, your stomach doesn't have a fighting chance to tell you, 'Enough already!'"

Source: http://www.nj.com/business/index.ssf/2011/09/no_break_for_lunch_at_work_cou.html

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Verena posted a comment visible where the online article appears:

Yippee! My colleague and a New Jersey Professional Coach peer, Tony Calabrese of Absolute Transitions, and I were quoted in this Star-Ledger article today! Good information and handy even if you don't work at an office. Self-employed people such as myself are wise to do the same thing... take a break AWAY from your desk, go outside, breathe the air, go for a walk and eat your lunch in a fresh environment. I find when I do this, it DOES clear my head and solutions may pop into my mind, or, I may have a so-called "chance" encounter that may spark a conversation that may lead to new opportunities. Sometimes I create new mental connections or receive inspiration that I quickly jot down in my journal or notepad. It's all good, it's all beneficial. Have a great day! You can reach me at: www.VibrantCoach.com or simply call 201-487-6910 if you have any questions or if you'd like to schedule a "Power to Change" conversation.

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