

Workplace Investigations

Objective, independent and rigorous



When allegations of inappropriate behaviour are made, or where concerns relating to cultural issues are identified, it is imperative that employers take action to mitigate risk to workers and the organisation. An investigation may need to stand up to external scrutiny.

As a leading provider of workplace investigations, iHR Australia offers a comprehensive suite of services, these include:

- **Independent Workplace Investigations** – thorough, impartial investigations into complaints regarding workplace behaviour, with findings based on the balance of probabilities
- **Appeals / Reviews of internal investigations** – where independent verification of the internal investigation is needed
- **Workplace Inquiries** – where it is suspected there may be cultural issues or risk related to workplace behaviour
- **Mediation** – where parties attempt to resolve issues by agreement, to restore ongoing working relationships
- **Workplace Investigation Officer training** – for those conducting internal investigations to ensure a fair and lawful process is followed

iHR Australia's investigations endeavour to make a finding of fact and also analyse contributing factors. Recommendations are made regarding risk control measures to prevent future issues.

The iHR difference:

- **Our team** – Professionals experienced in dealing with complaints at operational to senior executive and board level, including liaising with unions
- **Reporting** – Comprehensive reports, including clear findings on all allegations and recommendations for prevention of future risk
- **Resolution** – Observations and suggestions for further activities plus support with training, coaching or mediation where needed

For further information or a confidential discussion on how iHR Australia can assist your organisation, call 1300 884 687 or visit www.ihraustralia.com



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Dr John Cummins explores how bad food habits in the workplace can impact productivity.

BY DR JOHN CUMMINS, EXECUTIVE MEDICINE, SYDNEY



THERE ARE THREE PILLARS IN developing a workplace that promotes good health and productivity: encouraging excellent nutrition, enabling a variety of physical movement and managing the effects of any mental stress.

It's the first of these three pillars that appears to be the simplest but is rarely adopted.

Good diet = good health

The Interheart study, which covers all continents, demonstrated that 90 per cent of coronary artery disease and stroke risk can be explained by lifestyle measures, of which excellent nutrition, with a heavy emphasis on eating plenty of fruits, salads and vegetables, is an integral component.

The New England Journal of Medicine published an article in 2013 showing that the Mediterranean diet reduces future risk of heart attack by 30 per cent, which has the same correlating effect as a pharmaceutical cholesterol-lowering medication. The Mediterranean diet has been consistently proven to have a protective effect on arteries over the past two decades.

From a cancer perspective, processed meats (sausages, salami, etc) are directly carcinogenic, particularly increasing the likelihood of bowel cancer, while obesity (a reflection of excess caloric intake) likely explains 20–30 per cent of all cancers.

Then there's high glycaemic index carbohydrates, such as white bread, dates, watermelon and

cornflakes, that result in sugar surges in the blood which stresses the pancreas and possibly contributes to type 2 diabetes.

As Australians, we naturally live in a culture that encourages weight gain by its sedentary focus. Our culture is awash with excessive carbohydrates, a lack of emphasis on fibres (for example, legumes, beans, peas, chickpeas, lentils and even peanuts), as well as an inadequate intake of vegetables and salads.

The influence of nutrition on behaviour

Energy levels can fluctuate according to the timing of meals, as well as the volume and make-up of meals, caffeinated beverages and sugar-loaded drinks.

There are two ways in which work culture can influence positive nutrition behaviour in employees. The first of those is the food that's supplied to employees at work. Often food provided for events like team meetings and lunchtime gatherings are extremely poor food choices, such as nutrient-poor biscuits and high-calorie, sugared soft drinks and fruit juices.

In addition, food that's supplied and brought in for corporate events is often high in saturated fats, poor-quality carbohydrates and lacking in vegetables and salads.

The second practice is to educate staff on how to eat healthily at work. It's not complex, yet some people don't understand basic healthy eating concepts. »

WHAT SHOULD WE BE EATING?

IF YOU IMAGINE A FAMILY DINNER PLATE, THE PORTION ALLOCATION WOULD BE DIVIDED AS SUCH:

50% of your plate (food intake) should be vegetables, salads or other plant food that reflect a variety of colours.



25% should be a healthy lean protein. For example, tofu, chicken breast, turkey breast or grilled fish.



25% should be a multigrain or low glycaemic index carbohydrate. For example, multigrain bread, sweet potato (not regular potato) or multigrain pasta.



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Simple practices to put in place to enable good nutrition choices include healthy eating messaging in areas where people congregate, such as the water fountain and kitchen areas. Another good policy is to hold nutrition seminars with external speakers and offering nutritional counselling as a staff health benefit.

These strategies could have a significant impact on productivity if implemented.

In my experience, many workers simply need to be educated on how to choose a healthy meal, especially when buying their lunch from a food court or local cafe.

Tips to eating well

Most people tend to eat a very healthy breakfast, with low GI cereal and skim or low fat milk, or multigrain toast with avocado or another healthy spread.

Yet, typically they then order lunches from food courts that are high GI, carbohydrate-rich – types of food that you don't need to eat a lot of to put on weight. For example, if staff eat lunches that contain energy-rich foods, such as white bread or turkish bread, white rice and red or fried meat, without many vegetables, they feel tired in the early afternoon.

Here are some healthy work lunch alternatives:

- A filling salad made on a base of lentils and/or chickpeas.
- A general garden salad with protein, such as chicken, but skip the creamy dressing.
- A vegetarian pattie on multigrain bread with a large amount of salad as filler.
- Rice paper rolls with bountiful salad filling – generally Vietnamese food is often fresh with plenty of plant-type food.
- In terms of take-away, look for healthy food chains that are salad-based.

If you look hard enough, you can find a food outlet dedicated to vegetarian or very healthy food. Try to avoid the majority of food that is sold in food courts which can be unhealthy and energy-dense, predisposing individuals to significant weight gain.

What food should be in the office?

Firstly, fruit juice should not be in sight in a workplace kitchen, as it predisposes individuals to increased sugar intake and potential weight gain. Besides, water is a great healthy alternative and is free.

Healthy snack options could include:

- Nuts (a maximum of 18 nuts per snack).
- Raw vegetables cut into bite-sized pieces.
- Some healthy commercially-packaged snacks.
- Multigrain biscuits/snacks.
- Avocado, salad, baked beans, etc.
- A fruit bowl that's kept topped up all week is very important. Two pieces of fruit a day keeps us healthy, reduces blood pressure due to the high potassium content in fruits and reduces the risk of bowel cancer because of the high fibre fruit contains.

Food that's brought in for events should be from a supplier who can cater for foods that are rich in salad and vegetables, less dense in carbohydrates and have a healthy protein, whether that's chicken breast, fish, turkey breast or tofu. Ideal examples include Vietnamese rolls, stir-fried vegetables with a healthy protein, vegetarian choices or even soups.

Catering and the next step

In my experience, it's rare to see catered corporate events that provide the ideal food mix. For many of the business people that I see, the predominant reason for weight gain is driven by the provision

of food in the workplace. Many are forced to spend significant time in meetings, and being fed nutrient-poor and calorie-rich foods, such as biscuits and breads.

One good thing about many catering companies is that the presentation of their food is generally pleasing to look at – after all, we eat with our eyes.

Fruits and vegetables come in an array of attractive colours and textures, so a little extra time in the workplace spent arranging creative and healthy platters is a quick crowd pleaser. Plus, staff are getting the nutrients they need to avoid the afternoon slump.

Plus, with a plethora of readily available, and affordable, health food options in mainstream supermarkets today, platters of deep fried foods and pies are quickly becoming a thing of the past.

Good nutrition and healthy eating habits are not concepts that are often campaigned in the workplace. However, with the direct relationships between bad food choices, weight gain and poor energy levels, the food provided and promoted in the workplace is something that could do with serious thought and possibly action by those in leadership positions. 🍎



ABOUT DR JOHN CUMMINS

Dr John Cummins is a specialist consultant physician, as well as principal and medical director of Executive Medicine, Sydney.

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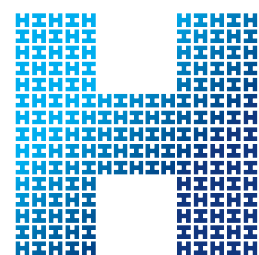
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