NEWS | RESEARCH

Unhealthy eating behaviors at night may affect workplace performance

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By **Manbeena Chawla** | April 10, 2021



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Study finds those late-night snacks may be hurting you at work

A recent study at the North Carolina State University in the US finds that unhealthy eating behaviors at night can make people less helpful and more withdrawn the next day at work.

The researchers found that, when people engaged in unhealthy eating behaviors, they were more likely to report having physical problems the next morning. Problems included headaches, stomachaches and diarrhea.

In addition, when people reported unhealthy eating behaviors, they were also more likely to report emotional strains the next morning – such as feeling guilty or ashamed about their diet choices. Those physical and emotional strains associated with unhealthy eating were, in turn, related to changes in how people behaved at work throughout the day.

The researchers also found that people who were emotionally stable – meaning people who are better able to cope with stress because they're less emotionally volatile – suffered fewer adverse effects from unhealthy eating.

Not only were emotionally stable people less likely to have physical or emotional strains after unhealthy eating, their workplace behaviors were also less likely to change even when they reported physical or emotional strains.

"For the first time, we have shown that healthy eating immediately affects our workplace behaviors and performance," says Seonghee "Sophia" Cho, corresponding author of the study and an assistant professor of psychology at North Carolina State University. "It is relatively well established that other health-related behaviors, such as sleep and exercise, affect our work. But nobody had looked at the short-term effects of unhealthy eating."

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