

Meals for workers

The workload of the population has undergone major changes over the last 30 years, which should be reflected in changes in their habitual eating habits:

- the number of workers exposed to heavy **physical work** has **decreased** (today we see it e.g. in miners, loggers, rescue workers),
- **increased employment with** mostly **sedentary** (e.g. administration, banking),
- computer work has increased (again, sedentary jobs).

It is important to remember that not all professions work under the same conditions, and we have to adapt our diet accordingly (physically demanding work, office work, shift work, night work, etc.).

Examples of dietary recommendations for certain groups of workers

Employee nutrition varies:

- according to the type of work
- according to energy expenditure at work
- according to thermoregulation requirements
- according to the presence of pollutants in the workplace
- in shift work

All population groups should ensure adequate intake of vitamin C. In particular, people with intensive mental work or people working in areas with higher levels of environmental pollution (e.g. places with high car traffic, industrial and mining areas). Vitamin C (as well as vitamin E) is an antioxidant, which means that it reduces the activity of oxygen free radicals (found in increased amounts in these areas and damaging to the human body) and plays a crucial role in the adaptive response to stress, which is beneficial for people with intense mental work.

Diet of hard workers

This type of work is found among miners, some workers, but also, for example, firefighters and rescue workers. Obviously, their **energy expenditure** will be relatively **high**, so they need to **take in more energy**, which is achieved by increasing the proportion of (good quality) fat in their diet. At the same time, we ensure an adequate intake of complete protein, which ensures the increase in muscle mass required for the performance of their profession. To ensure higher reactivity and thus reduce the risk of injuries, we monitor the adequate intake of B vitamins. For higher fluid losses through sweating, we also increase their intake. As with all other groups of people, the diet should be varied and balanced.

Hot food service

The diet should be energy adequate, with less fat but plenty of carbohydrates and protein in the form of more low-calorie snacks. People working in hot environments sweat more, which requires **increased intake** of appropriate **fluids** (not only water, but also a certain amount of salts - sodium chloride, potassium salts - go with sweat, calcium and magnesium) in the form of mineral waters (the types of which must be alternated), weakly sweetened fruit or green teas; if necessary, ionic drinks can be drunk, but this is not necessary with an otherwise varied and balanced diet. It is difficult for the body to cope with transitions from hot to cold; sufficient vitamins are useful to prevent infections. The tendency to a reduced appetite (due to working in the heat) can be minimised by increased seasoning of food (spices, salt).

Eating in a cold environment

Working in a cold environment is a broad term. For example, warehouse workers who spend a large part of their working shift in refrigerated or freezing rooms, where temperatures can be as low as -30°C, or constantly moving from cold to warm environments. In addition to adequate clothing, these workers should consume a diet slightly higher in fat than is consistent with a rational diet and generally have a slightly increased energy intake. They should drink hot drinks regularly during working hours and avoid drinks containing alcohol.

Catering in chemical plants

Workers in chemical plants should ensure an adequate energy intake with sufficient carbohydrates and protein, with a slightly increased intake of vitamins and minerals.

Shift operation

Shift work means that working hours are irregular, at different times of the day. Despite all the positives from an economic point of view, this type of employment can also have negative effects, particularly on the health of workers. The human body is set up to work during the day and sleep at night. The change is to a certain extent adjustable, but it is more difficult to tolerate if the employee works once at night and once during the day. Therefore, the diet should be as close to the norm as possible. If we take into account, for example, the stomach,

which works during the day and is relatively quiet at night, it is necessary to adjust the diet accordingly. This does not mean, however, that the worker should not eat at night at all. At night, meals should be small, easily digestible, at regular intervals of 2-3 hours, not forgetting the drinking regime. In the case of a night shift, the last light meal should be around 4 am, as part of maintaining metabolic rest during sleep.

Legislation

The Labour Code (Act No. 262/2006 Coll.) stipulates that the employer is obliged to provide employees with meals during all shifts. Thus, the employer is legally obliged to allow the employee to leave the workplace to visit a restaurant during the statutory meal and rest breaks (this obligation is not imposed only if the employee is sent on a business trip - in this case, however, the employer is obliged to pay the employee the so-called "meal allowance"). However, it also depends on the place of employment specified in the contract - if the place of employment is "Europe", the employer does not actually send the employee on a business trip, so the employer is not obliged to pay the per diem).

- The provision of meals during the work shift is entirely a personal matter of the employee.
- The employer may specify workplace meals in more detail by means of an internal regulation.
- The employer may or may not participate in the provision of catering both organizationally and financially (providing a contribution to the payment of catering, providing premises for the operation of restaurant catering, or even fully providing it - e.g. factory catering or delivery of ready-made meals).
- Employees are also legally entitled to a meal and rest break of at least 30 minutes after a maximum of 6 hours of continuous working time. A different regulation applies to juvenile workers, i.e. workers under 18 years of age, who must be given a break after no more than 4.5 hours of continuous work.

When deciding on the length of the break, consideration must be given to the way in which staff are catered for. The duration of the break period should be set to allow for the consumption of food, including the time required to travel to and from the place of eating. The meal break shall not be counted as part of the working time. In the case of work which cannot be interrupted, the worker must be provided with adequate rest and meal periods without interruption; these periods shall be counted as working time.

A juvenile worker must always be given a standard break, i.e. one that involves a break from work (not just a reasonable rest period). The break may be divided into several parts, at least one of which must be at least 15 minutes, and the total rest period must be at least 30 minutes. Meal and rest breaks shall not be provided at the beginning or end of the working period; they shall be for eating purposes and not for later or earlier departures from and arrival at the workplace. The use of the statutory meal (and rest) break during working hours to consume lunch (or other main meal during afternoon, evening or night duty) leads to the formation of a regular eating habit, which is primary in health care. Regular and high-quality meals contribute to the maintenance of good physical and mental health of employees, and thus, of course, to the maintenance of work performance.

Links

Related articles

- Hygiene of the working environment
- Health promotion in companies

References

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