

Fun Fact of the Week

5 No-Fail Ways to Eat Healthy at a Work Conference*

Kelsey Nelson

Sticking to a healthy eating plan is tough any day of the week. But throw in a business trip, and it won't matter how many meal prep gurus you follow on Instagram or how well you've planned out your week with fresh produce, the temptation to swerve away from smart choices will be greater than ever.

Between off-schedule meal times and happy hours with coworkers, traveling for a work conference can be one of the worst culprits of derailing your fitness goals. So, we asked Jess Scott, nutritionist-in-residence at healthy snack company Graze, to dish on how we can get work done on a business trip, keep our energy level super high (for those long, super-social days) AND stay on track with our healthy diet.



1. Plan out your healthy on-the-go snacks. The best defense is a good offense, so set yourself up for success by planning ahead. Jess says to pack light snacks in your carry-on bag to help you get through any pre- or post-conference travel. “Graze snack packs fit easily in your travel bag and keep your hunger at bay if you’re ever stuck on a delayed flight,” she says. Protein bars, fruit and individual servings of healthy foods like carrots and hummus also fit easily in your purse or glove box, won’t be too messy and can serve as the perfect healthy bite to hold you over if a speaker or session is running long.

2. Pick your battles and enjoy some splurges. Take some time before you pack your bags to do research on the conference so that you can be selective, not restrictive, advises Jess. “Take a look at the conference itinerary so you can evaluate which events are worth a food and drink splurge and which ones aren’t. Once you’ve picked your splurge events, enjoy them guilt free. Two events per week is a good number, depending on your health goals.”

3. Figure out healthy alternatives to satisfy your cravings. “From complimentary snacks to bountiful buffets, conferences are riddled with cookies, chips and other unhealthy yet convenient snacks. I’m all about a few simple swaps so you feel energized as you run from one panel discussion to the next,” says Jess. She adds, “Trans-fat and sugar-ridden foods will send your blood sugar levels to a rocking high and give you a quick rush of energy.” But that energy will soon plummet, and you’ll be even hungrier than before, so try these swaps instead.

If you crave sweets, like cookies, swap them with a healthier medley, like a mix of chocolate nibs with pecans and vanilla-flavored pumpkin seeds. “The chocolate provides antioxidants while the latter provide magnesium, which helps in the production of energy and protein — essential to avoid the post-keynote slump,” Jess explains.

If salty snacks are definitely a part of your squad, put down the bag of chips and try a combination of mesquite almonds, corn chips, chili seasoning and corn nuts instead. Jess notes that “almonds provide healthy fats and vitamin E, while the corn provides a satisfying crunch.”

4. **Celebrate the small wins, both at home and away:** Let's be real — we can all use a little positive reinforcement in our lives, and that should apply to our healthy living goals too. Jess agrees, "When you drink your eight glasses of water per day or avoid that second martini at the bar, then give yourself a well-deserved pat on the back, a bubble bath, a souvenir shopping spree or anything else that takes advantage of your conference locale. These are little rewards that contribute to helping you feel great and achieve long-term healthy habit changes." If you want to whisper "Go, me!" to yourself too, we won't judge.

5. **Hydrate:** While it may seem like a no brainer to stay hydrated, hotel rooms and airport restrictions can make it more difficult than usual. "Hydrating your body should start the minute you get out of bed in the morning. I recommend having a big glass of water first thing in the morning, or take advantage of those complimentary bottles in your hotel room. Don't forget to keep drinking water throughout the day — try having a glass (a full eight ounces) — during each scheduled break between conference sessions. For extra hydration, skip the afternoon coffee and choose an herbal tea instead."