

Transcript for Podcast: Staying Healthy When Starting a New Job

Hello my name is Judith Cook.

If you're one of the thousands of Americans trying to make positive changes in your diet and exercise routine you may find that landing a new job can trigger a setback in your healthy lifestyle. But you can combat this by keeping in mind that all times of transition, even positive changes like a new job, can lead you to resume your old, unhealthy habits. So here are some ideas on how to make that new job an opportunity to continue your healthier lifestyle or even get started on a new one.

The first idea is give yourself permission to take some time out of your workday to orient yourself to your new surroundings. You might want to bring your walking shoes with you to work, and use your lunch hour to explore your new environment. Look for some nice walking or bike paths, and consider finding a walking partner at work to help you get acquainted with your new work neighborhood. In addition to having an exercise buddy, you'll be getting informal socialization about your new work setting and co-workers.

Once you're comfortable getting to work on time, try parking further away from your office, and using the extra distance to put some more miles into your exercise schedule. If you take the bus, try getting off at the stop before your regular stop and walking the extra distance. Another tip is to take the stairs instead of the elevator. Try to do this at least once a day, maybe twice.

You might want to bring your lunch to work during the first week to make sure you get a good nutritious meal that boosts your job performance. Continue this practice to form a healthy and cost-saving health habit. Or, check out the local lunch options around your new job and look for healthy places to eat, especially ones that involve a short walk to and from the office or worksite.

You can also plan snacks to avoid the temptation to eat junk food or fast food throughout the workday. Having an apple at mid-morning might just help you avoid giving in to the urge to splurge on a high-calorie, fast-food lunch. Or, munching on fresh veggies and low-cal ranch dressing in the mid-afternoon might help you say no to a high-fat latte and pastry when you feel your energy ebbing near the end of the workday.

Make sure to drink plenty of water. Scope out the water fountain locations at your worksite, and keep refillable water bottles handy so you can have water nearby. Make sure those bottles are BPA-free.

Are there resources at or near your job that can help you exercise and maintain a healthy routine? Some work sites sponsor yoga or Pilates sessions. There might be a health club near where you work, making it convenient to stop in on your way home or on your way into your job. There might even be a weight watchers group nearby. The great thing about a new job is the opportunity to explore the healthy resources nearby. Make sure you check those out.

Remember, starting a new job is one of the three most stressful life changes a person can make. So be sure to make some time in your personal schedule to engage in activities that lower your stress level. For some people, that involves drinking a soothing herbal tea. For others, that means listening to calming music on the way to and from the job. Other folks find that sharing their thoughts and feelings with a good friend or family member relieves stress.

But most importantly, start each day of the first weeks and months at your new job with a positive outlook and healthy attitude. Remember, it takes 21 days to build a new habit. Your new job is the perfect opportunity to start something healthy, while you also build your career and increase your earning power.

I want to thank you for listening today. And I also want to acknowledge that some of the information I've shared with you comes from Grace Derocha, a registered dietitian and certified diabetes and weight-loss management educator. You can check out her blog at the website A Healthier Michigan at the address www.ahealthiermichigan.org.