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When you're time-poor, busy and stressed, it can seem daunting to eat healthily, and too easy to reach for convenience food. Try these strategies from Tara Thorne.
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Nutrition to go-go

Breakfast

Overnight oats: Oats help lower cholesterol, stabilise blood sugar levels and enhance immunity, but they can take time to cook. (Don't buy instant oats – they're devoid of most of their fibre in order to make them quick-cooking). You can, however, prepare oats the night before so they're ready to go the moment you wake. Throw ¼ cup slow cooking oats into a mason jar. Add 1 cup of milk alternative, 1 tablespoon of chia seeds, and half a banana. Adding a vegetable amps up the nutrient factor, and steamed sweet potato goes well with banana. Add some hydrolysed collagen for a good source of protein, a dash of cinnamon and date sugar, if you like things a little sweeter, and refrigerate ready to grab in the morning.

Tip: Prep up to five jars ahead of time; one for each morning of the working week.

Smoothie packs: Smoothies are a very nutrient-dense breakfast, and because they're blended they're easy on your digestive system, reducing the amount of 'work' it has to do. Save time by pre-making smoothie packs and storing them flat - to maximise space - in your freezer. In the morning simply tip into a blender, add a milk alternative, blitz and pour into a mason jar ready for the road. Include a protein, a healthy fat, and some fibre in your smoothie to stabilise blood sugar levels, and set you up right for the rest of your day.

Protein: Protein powder, nut butter or hydrolysed collagen, (good for those who don't like protein powders).

Healthy fat: Coconut oil or avocado.

Fruit: Berries are one of the healthiest foods on the planet and are a great low-sugar fruit to use in smoothies.

Green: A dark leafy green such as kale or spinach works well. Sweeten with raw honey or a couple of dates.

Tip: Invest in a single-sized blender that doubles as a travel cup for easy on-the-go portability, (which also reduces your washing-up time).

Breakfast burritos: These can be frozen and heated up quickly in the microwave or oven while you get ready for work. Choose healthy ingredients to fill a tortilla, such as scrambled eggs, black beans, salsa, avocado, capsicum, jalapeños, tomato, spinach, broccoli, sweet potato, and mushrooms. Make ahead of time, wrap tightly in parchment or wax paper then again in cling wrap, and store in a freezer-friendly airtight container.

Lunch

Mason jar salads: These are a great way to make sure your lunches are healthy, even when you're pressed for time. Combinations are endless, but always include a protein, healthy fat and some fibre to stabilise blood sugar in order to avoid the

afternoon crash. Ideas include quinoa, chickpeas or boiled chicken for protein, plus avocado, olive oil or chia seeds as a healthy fat, and mixed vegetables for fibre, such as cherry tomatoes, cucumber, spinach or rocket.

Tip: Supercharge the nutrition factor by adding sprouts. Sprouts have, gram for gram, more nutrients than any other food!

Lunch on leftovers: There's nothing wrong with good, old-fashioned leftovers. Plan ahead: double batch your dinnertime meal so you have plenty left over. Refrigerate in an airtight glass container that can be easily heated up in the microwave at work the next day. Soups and casserole-style dishes work well.

'Ave an avocado: The humble (and very transportable) avocado is packed with nutrients, plus fibre, good fat and protein. Plop one in your bag and smash onto crispbread or toast. Keep salt and pepper at your desk to sprinkle on top and you've got yourself a healthy and delicious uber-quick lunch. Combine it with a handful of nuts or squish some chickpeas on top for protein and you're good to go!

Tip: Try adding hot sauce or turmeric. Turmeric will give your avocado toast a nutrition boost that's hard to beat.

Dinner

Break out the slow cooker! Throw your dinner's ingredients in before you leave for work and come home to a healthy, warm meal, ready to serve.

Tip: Dedicate some time on the weekend to prepping slow cooker freezer bags. Simply throw all your ingredients into a zip lock freezer bag and write on the outside what the meal is and any extras you need to throw in when it comes time to cook, such as stock. Be sure to write the date on the meal so you know which one to grab first.

Pre-wash and cut veggies: It may seem a little laborious, but this simple strategy can save you oodles of time in the long run and is a surefire way to increase your odds of chowing down on a nutritious dinner after a busy day. Store in airtight glass containers ready to use in easy-to-whip-up meals, such as stir-fries and soups.

Tip: Keep cans of beans and lentils on hand and throw in a pot with some stock and your veggies to make a quick, filling soup.

Batch meals: Ensure you'll eat healthy dinners all week by spending a bit of time batch-cooking on the weekend. A little pre-planning goes a long way: meal plan what you're going to eat for the week, make sure they're freezer-friendly, then get to work chopping and cooking for a couple of hours. Get the whole family involved! This will reduce the time it takes to make meals as well as teach your children healthy eating habits. ✨

Quick snack ideas

Snacks are important to keep blood sugar stabilised throughout the day. Take a little time to plan snacks for a big nutritional pay-off by employing these simple strategies.

Freeze muffins: When making your next batch, double the recipe and freeze half the muffins once baked. Take a bit of time to individually wrap muffins in parchment paper before you freeze, making it easy to grab a single muffin to go.

Pre-make packs: Create an assembly line and get everyone involved in pre-making snack packs for the week. Think nuts, seeds, bliss balls, and dried fruit.

Homemade dips: Hummus is a versatile fibre- and protein-rich spread for toast, wraps, or as a vegetable dip. Enhance your hummus with turmeric or avocado.

Buy a banana carrier: Always have an unbruised banana in your bag ready to eat when hunger strikes. Pair it with some nuts for healthy fat and protein to slow down the release of sugar into your bloodstream.