

10 Healthy Habits for a Busy Schedule

Hillary Buch, MS, RD, CSO, LD



Considering it is May and Mother's Day, it seemed like the perfect time to focus on creating healthy habits with a busy schedule since moms are always juggling a jam-packed schedule. However, this article isn't just for moms it holds true for every single one

of us and our busy lifestyles that sometimes feel too overwhelming to even think about incorporating healthy habits into. So, take a 10-minute break to soak up this information and see if there are any habits you could work on.

Start Your Day Right

We tend to be in a rush in the morning as we prepare for work and send kids off to school. This makes breakfast an easy thing to neglect in the chaos. Breakfast breaks your overnight fast from food and starts fueling your body for the day. This meal doesn't have to be complicated, something simple will suffice. This can be as easy as grabbing a low-fat Greek yogurt and an apple; having a piece of toast with peanut butter and a banana; or prep breakfast burritos in advance, store in the freezer and pop in the microwave when ready to eat.

Make a Plan

Meal planning can seem tedious, but it doesn't have to be. If you're feeling ambitious you can plan for the whole week and decide what to have for breakfast, lunches, snacks, dinner and how to utilize any leftovers. You can also take a simpler route by planning out lunches for the week, the dinners for a few nights or even just planning for dinner on the night

you must work late. This is also a great strategy to use for when your kids have evening activities so you're not falling back on fast food. Keep in mind this has to work for you, so you'll stick with it.

Make Room in the Freezer

Speaking of leftovers, another great option for these is to freeze them. Freeze individual portions to defrost and use for lunches in a pinch. Soups, stews and sauces like spaghetti or marinara sauce are also great to make extra of or in batches to freeze and then use for a quick prep meal. Generally, leftovers can be stored about 3 months in the freezer.

Less is More

When you are short on time does the thought of making a recipe with a long list of ingredients seem too time consuming? You can make a variety of flavorful meals utilizing five ingredients or less. These can be a great option for a quick no-fuss meal. There are whole cookbooks devoted to short ingredient list recipes and if you search online for these, you'll find hundreds of options like pesto chicken and veggies, baked buffalo chicken, black bean soup and crockpot teriyaki meatballs. Speaking of the crockpot (or Instant Pot), this is another great time-saving device that can get a homecooked meal on the table with little to no effort. It is as easy as throwing all the ingredients in, set the time, and let it cook for the day. It is possible to feel like you're doing less while reaping healthful benefits!

Don't Skip Meals

Sometimes you might feel so busy and think it would be easy to skip lunch (or another meal) to keep



ploughing through work or whatever task is at hand, but this won't help you in the long run. You'll miss an opportunity to properly fuel your body and give yourself a mental break. Plus, chances are later you will feel extra hungry and overeat at your next meal or eat a less nutritious snack, leaving you feeling stuffed and not at your best. The bottom line, make time for your meals.

Snack Smart

Don't be unprepared when those mid-morning or afternoon hunger pangs hit. Keep quick and healthy snacks on hand so you're not tempted by less filling options. Stash single serve packets or pre-portioned amounts of trail mix or nuts in your purse or desk drawer. Keep low-fat Greek yogurt in the fridge at work for an easy snack. Plan snacks the night before, slice fruit or chop vegetables to go with hummus and then pack ahead of time to bring to work with you. Try and avoid mindless munching while working at your computer or in the evenings while watching TV.

Stay Hydrated

It is easy to forget about water when you're busy and in a rush. Our body needs water to function properly. When we are dehydrated our cognitive function starts to decline and our brain won't work as efficiently as we want it to. Find a reusable water bottle you like, keep this filled and nearby throughout the day, so it is a constant reminder to drink up. Get bored with the taste of water? Use lemons, limes, cucumbers, mint, berries, or other fruits to add flavor to your water.

Get Moving

We all know we need to be active, and chances are at one time or another we have all felt too busy to exercise. When we are busy it is easy to make exercise less of a priority and take it off our schedule, but it is possible to make time for it and your body will be thanking you. Schedule it in as part of your day and then treat it like any other appointment or meeting you have and cannot miss. Get up from your desk throughout the day to stretch or take a quick 10-minute walk around your office or outside, if possible. Remember exercise doesn't have to be done all at once. It can be easier to do three or more 10-minute sessions throughout the day. Take the stairs

instead of the elevator or park farther out in a parking lot to get more movement in. Try involving your family or friends in activities. Go for walks, bike rides or other active adventures with your family. Meet friends to exercise instead of going out to eat. The bottom-line is being active is important for your physical and mental health and it doesn't have to be complicated, expensive or feel too time consuming.

You Lose if You Don't Snooze

Sleep is as important for good health as diet and exercise. Sometimes it is hard to get quality sleep with our busy lifestyles. Good sleep is more than just the number of hours we get, though it is recommended adults get at least seven hours a night, but also the quality of sleep and a consistent sleep schedule. Sleep helps the body repair itself and prepare the brain to learn, remember and create things. Regular lack of sleep and poor quality can increase risk for many diseases. It is best to try and go to bed and wake up close to the same time each day, even on weekends. Choose relaxing activities before bed like reading a book or taking a warm shower. Avoid electronics because the blue light from the screen can suppress our melatonin production which will interfere with our sleep-wake cycles, making it harder to fall asleep and wake up the next day. Improving your sleep can help you feel more alert, energetic, and refreshed and ready to tackle whatever the day brings you.

Treat Yourself

Even when you're busy with work, your kids' schedules, and other obligations, you need to find time for yourself and self-care. Many of the topics covered above are involved in self-care, like eating healthy, getting good sleep and exercise, but doing additional things for yourself that you enjoy gives you time to relax, take a mental break and pamper yourself. This looks different for everyone. It can be gardening, reading, getting your nails done, shopping, doing another hobby or activity you enjoy or taking a trip somewhere.

Taking care of yourself should take priority. It is key to making you feel happier and physically, mentally and emotionally ready to deal with life's pressures and stresses.



Featured Recipe

Sweet Potato, Black Bean & Avocado Breakfast Burritos

For complete recipe and nutrition facts: [Ambitious Kitchen](#)



INGREDIENTS

- 6** 8-inch whole wheat tortillas
- 3** medium sweet potatoes
- 1 (15 ounce)** black beans, rinsed and drained
- ½ tsp** cumin
- ¼ tsp** chili powder
- Few dashes** red pepper flakes, if desired
- 6** large eggs (or 8 large egg whites)
- 1** avocado, diced
- ½ cup** shredded Mexican cheese or cheese of your choice
- ⅓ cup** red enchilada sauce

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1. Cook** sweet potatoes: **Pierce** sweet potatoes with fork a few times and **cook** in microwave on high for **4-6 minutes** or until cooked through. Alternatively, you can **roast** in the oven at **375 degrees** for 45 minutes or until fork tender. Once cooked, **remove** skins and place potatoes in medium bowl. **Mash** with fork and set aside.
- 2.** In a separate large bowl **add** black beans, cumin, chili powder and red pepper flakes (if using). **Stir** to combine.
- 3.** In a medium bowl **beat** eggs (or egg whites) together. **Place** a skillet over medium-low heat and **add** the eggs to cook. **Fold** eggs every few minutes to make them fluffy. Once cooked **remove** from heat.
- 4. Warm** tortillas for **10-20** seconds in the microwave to make easy to roll.
- 5.** To assemble burritos: **lay out** warm tortillas, evenly **distribute** and spread sweet potatoes on each tortilla. **Distribute** scrambled eggs, diced avocado, black beans and shredded cheese on each tortilla. **Drizzle** about a tablespoon of enchilada sauce on each. **Tuck** ends of tortillas in and then **roll** to form a burrito.
- 6.** To freeze and eat when ready, individually **wrap** each burrito in foil and place in freezer. To reheat, **remove** foil and microwave until warmed through, about **2-3 minutes**.

