

Give Bacteria The Pink Slip In Your Office Space

(NAPSA)—The lunch hour has shrunk. What was a 60-minute break for most workers is now 30 minutes or less for more than half of all employees (53 percent), according to a new survey by the American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foods Foundation.

And even then, lunch is more likely to be al desko than al fresco. In fact, desks are doing double duty for more than just lunch: 57 percent of survey respondents say they snack at their desks and nearly one in three eats breakfast there, too. A small percentage (11 percent) even dine desktop for dinner.

But while shorter lunch hours may result in workers logging more hours, it may also be causing them to log in additional sick days as more desktops hide bacteria that can lead to foodborne illness.

“Workday demands can make it almost impossible to think about proper food safety,” says registered dietitian Jackie Newgent, national spokesperson for the ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Food Safety...It’s in Your Hands program. “But as desktops continue to replace kitchen tables as a place to eat meals, it’s important to follow food safety steps at the office.”

The Dirt On Desktops

Survey results show more than three out of four workers only occasionally clean their desktops before eating—and 20 percent never do. What’s more, 95 percent of workers say they neglect to clean their computer keyboard and mouse daily, though they’re often eating while working at their computers. One in three cleans them less than once a month and 11 percent say they never clean them at all.

“The majority of illness-causing bacteria is spread through your hands,” says Newgent. “Not surprising when you consider everything on your desktop that gets touched by either you or someone else. A clean desktop is



your best defense against foodborne illnesses.”

- Food safety tip: Prevent bacteria from spoiling your desktop dining experience by supplying yourself with cleaning products such as antibacterial wipes, sprays and paper towels, at your desk.

- Food safety tip: Keep moist towelettes or antibacterial soap nearby so you can wash your hands before eating.

Corporate Sharing

For many, eating at work isn’t limited to meals. According to the survey, birthdays rank first as the most popular occasion for sharing food in the workplace, followed closely by the winter holiday season and meetings. But while sharing food can be a nice break, it also can serve as a breeding ground for harmful bacteria if proper food safety procedures aren’t followed.

According to the survey, nearly four out of five office workers say shared foods sit out for more than two hours—and 44 percent say food sits out all day or until it is finished.

“Perishable foods—like pizza, cold cuts, dips, salads and sandwiches—should never sit out for more than two hours, at which point harmful bacteria begin to multiply rapidly and your risk of foodborne illness increases significantly,” says Newgent.

After Hours Eat-iquette

According to the ADA/ConAgra Foods survey, more than half of all office employees work more than eight hours a day, with two in five people clocking in as many as 10 hours—14 percent even say it’s not unusual for them to work more than 10 hours a day.

As work hours extend past the standard “dinner hour,” many employees hunger for after-hours meal solutions. More than a third of office workers (35 percent) order in dinner or pick up carry-out from a restaurant. Another 30 percent head for office vending machines for snacks and 20 percent say they wander the office looking for foods left over from meetings or office celebrations.

- Food safety tip: If you typically work late, keep a drawer full of nonperishable foods—such as peanut butter, shelf-stable pudding cups, whole fruit, popcorn or sunflower seeds—to keep your energy up safely.

- Food safety tip: When reheating leftovers for another meal, heat foods to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit (even if you microwave it)—use a meat thermometer to make sure.

For more information, visit www.homefoodsafety.org.

The ADA/ConAgra Foods Home Food Safety...It’s in Your Hands program educates consumers that home food safety is a serious issue and provides solutions so Americans can easily and safely handle food in their own kitchens. This program complements government-sponsored food safety initiatives that speak to the leading critical food-handling violations by emphasizing the following four key messages: 1) Wash hands often; 2) Keep raw meats and ready-to-eat foods separate; 3) Cook to proper temperatures; 4) Refrigerate promptly below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.