



RECLAIM THE LUNCHBREAK

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INTRODUCTION

FROM TONY WOOD, BUPA SALES DIRECTOR

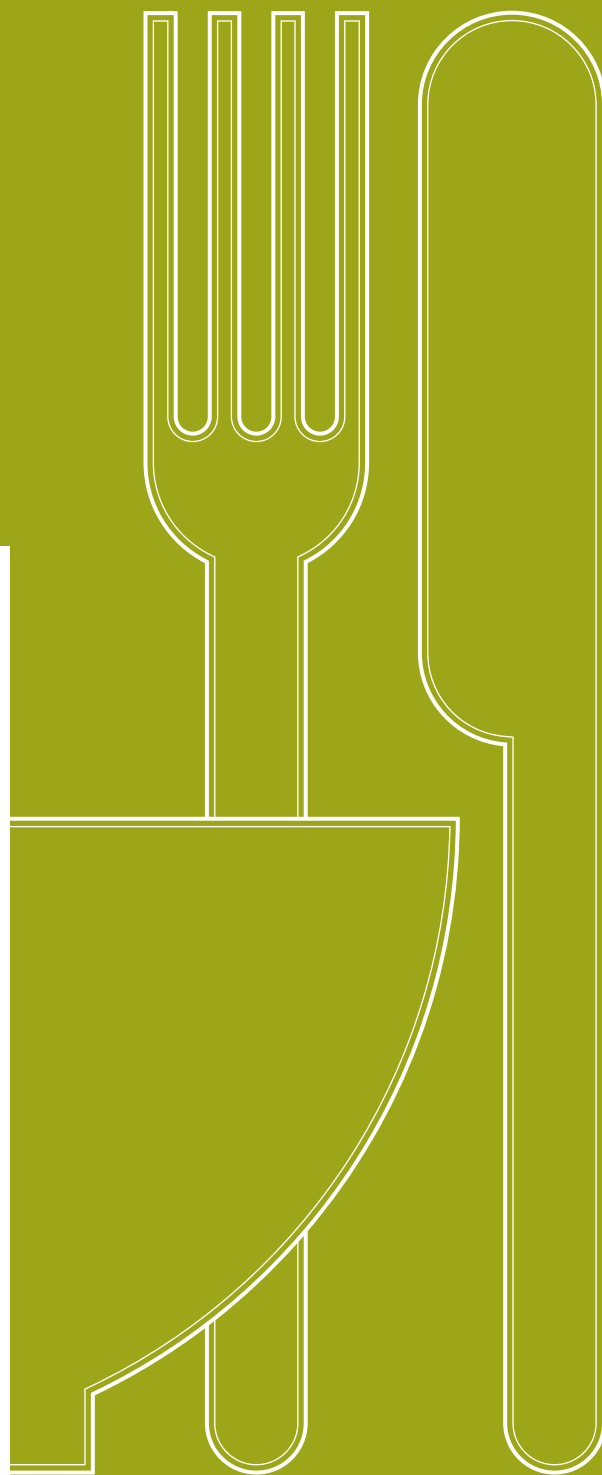
At Bupa, we are committed to understanding employee welfare and how working conditions can impact upon our health and wellbeing. The Reclaim the Lunchbreak report examines the productivity levels of UK workers, exploring the barriers that prevent businesses from achieving sustained productivity throughout the day.

We commissioned this latest piece of research to analyse the nation's current working routines and highlight any potential negative affects these are having on UK businesses. The findings of our study demonstrate that many employees are working too hard without taking a break, causing their energy levels to crash.

The Reclaim the Lunchbreak report has found that more than six million¹ employees skip their lunch break. As a result productivity levels are plummeting significantly in the afternoon, affecting employees' ability to work effectively.

It is not healthy for workers or businesses, bottom lines to skip the lunch break. In fact, it is costing UK companies £50 million¹ a day in lost productivity – something no business will be keen to hear.

We believe companies should look to adopt some healthy habits to help keep employees refreshed and to sustain productivity. These might be simple measures for a more productive office life, through to introducing healthcare products and services for their people.



KEY FINDINGS FROM THE REPORT

Hefty workloads, looming deadlines and pressures from management all contribute to UK workers not taking a lunch break. Over six million UK employees do not leave their desks for lunch with just 13 percent managing to get away for an hour¹.

Not taking a break has a significant impact on employee's productivity levels and as a result British businesses, bottom lines are suffering. It is estimated dips in productivity are costing companies close to £50 million a day¹.

Almost half of UK employees feel their productivity levels plummet in the afternoon, the prime time being 3 o'clock, resulting in a loss of almost 40 minutes of their day¹.

Since British workers clock up the longest hours in Europe², it's not surprising there's an emotional and physical impact on employees.

Dr Jenny Leeson, Bupa's clinical director of occupational health, says: "In challenging economic times, the UK workforce is in overdrive and the lunch break is falling by the wayside. UK businesses may suffer as employees run on empty, with the long-term ramifications a potentially serious concern for employee health and wellbeing."

The alternative is unhealthy: without proper breaks, you and your workforce risk headaches, sore eyes, joint stiffness and muscle pain, as well as a lack of concentration, de-motivation, and potentially soaring levels of stress³.

"People are not machines and in order to maintain alertness we need to adjust the pace of the day," explains Dr Leeson. "We cannot work flat out all the time or we risk burnout. Taking breaks allows us to recover physically and mentally from the effects of the pressures upon us and helps ensure we have something in reserve for the rest of our day."

There are simple measures employers and employees alike can take to keep productivity levels up throughout the day.

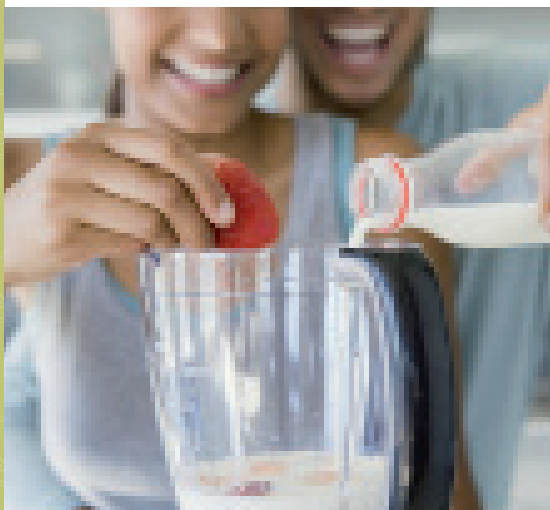
Productivity dips can be avoided through various methods including diet, exercise and working environments.

The following advice from Bupa, outlines some simple measures both employers and employees can adopt to create a happy and productive working environment.

DIET

Our diet plays a big part in energy and concentration levels. Christina Merryfield, Bupa's lead dietitian, advises the following to help maintain productivity throughout the working day:

- **stay hydrated.** Keep a large refillable water bottle on your desk and get into the routine of filling it up every morning and finishing it before you go home. Dehydration can affect your concentration and ability to work productively.
- **do not skip lunch.** Adrenaline can sometimes mask hunger and your brain will miss out on the essential nutrients and glucose it needs to function for the rest of the afternoon. People who are not taking time to eat and hydrate are missing out on essential nutrients and the opportunity to re-energise.
- **base your lunch on the three basic food groups** - one-third starch (potato, rice, pasta etc) - aim for these to be wholegrain variety as they are digested more slowly making us feel full for longer - over one-third vegetables or salad and the rest a low fat protein source. This will help maintain energy and concentration levels throughout the rest of the day



PSYCHOLOGY

Working environments and relationships impact our ability to work effectively. Dr. Sandra Delroy, clinical director for Bupa's Employee Assistance, recommends the following to encourage a healthy and productive workplace:

- **effective communication.** Increase face to face communications. Where possible try to speak to your colleagues rather than constantly sending emails. This can serve as motivators and stimulators for both employers and employees.
- **effective feedback.** Give specific and regular feedback. This promotes growth for employees and the organisation.
- **work/life balance.** Respect your employees and colleagues need for a healthy work/life balance. This will encourage prolonged work productivity as well as motivation

FITNESS

Regular exercise not only boosts energy levels but also relieves stress and improves our general mood. Russell Stocker MCSP SRP, Bupa physiotherapist, suggests the following ways to incorporate exercise into your daily work routine:

- **keep moving.** Try and get up from your desk every half an hour, even if just to stand up for a moment or walk on the spot for a few seconds. This will help reduce stiffness and tension.
- **free gym.** The world outside the office is a free gym, get out there and get your body moving. Go for a walk or run at lunchtime, take the stairs instead of the lifts and walk up the escalators to increase your heart rate and boost your energy levels.
- **stretch.** Stretch the muscles in your neck, shoulders and back to reduce strain and feel lighter. Static positions and lack of movement can lead to pain, loss of function and muscular tension. Movement and changes in posture help to reduce the ill effects of spending a long time sat down.

There is overwhelming evidence that healthy and engaged employees are absent less often, more productive, resilient, and a competitive advantage. In a challenging economy; competition is fierce and the world of work is increasingly intense. It is therefore important that organisations understand their health and wellbeing needs; and the interventions that will best meet these needs. Bupa has a range of products and services with teams dedicated to helping employers find what is right for them and their businesses, making their investment in people count.

HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

The longer-term consequences of ignoring your employees' health can ultimately be very costly to your business. Offering employees access to regular assessments will provide an understanding of their health risks and a personal action plan to minimise future health problems.

For more information on our full range of Health Assessments visit: www.bupa.co.uk/individuals/keeping-well/health-assessments

HEALTH INSURANCE

Whatever the size of your business, you'll have the reassurance of knowing that if your employees do fall ill, they have prompt access to diagnosis and treatment. It can also act as a powerful recruitment tool as it lets employees know that you care about their welfare.

For more information on our Business Health Insurance offering visit: www.bupa.co.uk/business/all-business/business-health-insurance

BUPA POSITIVE HEALTH

An interactive and proactive online programme, designed to help your employees take small, positive steps towards improving their health and wellbeing. Bupa Positive Health can benefit the health of your business by increasing productivity, decreasing the number of employees showing a high risk health status, improving employee attendance and strengthening employee loyalty through an enhanced employee benefits package.

For more information on Bupa Positive Health cover and its benefits, visit: www.bupa.co.uk/business/all-business/business-health-insurance/ins-positive-health

BUPA EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

A confidential counselling and advice service for employees offering practical and emotional support. Whether it is a workplace issue, a relationship breakdown, or a financial problem that is causing distress, we offer support when it is most needed.

For more information on Bupa Employee Assistance, visit: www.bupa.co.uk/business/all-business/employee-assistance

PRIVATE MEDICAL TREATMENT

We offer a range of private health services to suit your organisational needs including GP, Dental and Physiotherapy.

For more information on our Private Medical Treatment services visit: www.bupa.co.uk/business/large-business/private-medical-treatments

BUSINESS TRAVEL INSURANCE

Bupa's range of travel insurance provides your employees with worldwide, 24-hour, multi-trip annual travel protection.

For more information on our Business Travel Insurance offering visit: www.bupa.co.uk/business/all-business/travel-insurance

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

We offer a range of occupational health services for your business including health risk management, absence management, travel health services and seasonal flu vaccinations.

For more information on our Occupational Health services visit: www.bupa.co.uk/business/large-business/occupational-health

DENTAL INSURANCE

Bupa's Dental Plan brings you and your employees the best benefits for routine treatments including access to NHS and private dentists, market-leading oral cancer treatment, NHS costs paid in full and immediate cover.

For more information on our Dental Insurance visit: www.bupa.co.uk/business/all-business/dental-insurance

COMPANY HEALTH CASH PLANS

Our cash plans are designed to give your employees cash back towards everyday health costs which may help to reduce sickness and absence levels.

For more information on our Health Cash Plans visit: www.bupa.co.uk/business/all-business/business-cash-plan

Footnotes:

¹ The research findings are taken from a survey conducted amongst a nationally representative sample of adults working full time(1,011) by Fly Research between 10 January – 13 January 2011.

² Bupa January 2011, Bupa.co.uk

³ Unison, <http://www.unison.org.uk/worklifebalance/differentways.asp>

