

LUNCH ON THE RUN

When taking a break becomes dangerous.

BY BRYONY TAYLOR

It's been said so many times that you're probably tired of hearing that Britain has the longest working week in Europe. You will also know that taking a break from the office workload is a necessary part of remaining a compos mentis worker during the working day. Why then does Britain also have the largest number of workers taking the shortest lunch breaks?

It is often smokers who come under scrutiny and are lined up for shooting when it comes to taking breaks, however a recent survey by indigestion remedy maker, Rennie, shows that one in four office workers fear that taking a full lunch hour will make them look bad in front of colleagues and bosses; with over two thirds of employees not leaving the office for lunch. Should everyone be feeling all this guilt when taking their well earned hour of quality time?

A poll of 2,064 British workers found that 16-24 year olds were most likely to enjoy a longer lunch break with more than half taking 30-60 minutes; 45-54 year olds take the shortest lunch breaks, with a fifth taking less than 15 minutes. The greatest pressure was felt by the 25-34 year olds who were least comfortable taking their allocated lunch break.

Taking such short breaks can be dangerous for one's health; wolfing down food, coupled with the stress of the ringing conscience to get back to the rat race can have a knock on effect, with almost four million UK workers suffering from heartburn and indigestion.

Reminding yourself to take a lunch break can only have a positive effect on your health and lifestyle. Working eight to ten hours a day on your computer without a break can lead to painful ergonomic effects regardless of the goodness of your intentions. Taking several micro breaks throughout the day can combat stress and fatigue and has been shown to be more effective than taking a few longer breaks. What is important is that a micro break does not mean that you have to leave the office for five minutes, it merely means that you should stop doing a repetitive action such as using a computer. This can involve getting up and doing filing, photocopying or if you prefer, conducting a tea run.

Of those taking the Rennie survey, employees working in Yorkshire had the highest percentage of workers who claimed they took a midday break of less than 15 minutes. ■

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LACK OF LUNCH
UK LEAGUE TABLE:

- 1 YORKSHIRE
- 2 NORTH EAST
- 3 NORTH WEST
- 4 WALES
- 5 LONDON
- 6 SOUTH EAST
- 7 MIDLANDS
- 8 SCOTLAND
- 9 SOUTH WEST
- 10 EAST
- 11 NORTHERN IRELAND

Source: Rennie