

## **Nutra-Ergonomics**

Faculty:

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Nutra-ergonomics describes the interface between workers, their work environment, and their performance in relation to their nutritional status.

To have a productive workplace, it is important to consider the physical and mental well-being of the employees. With a good nutritional status, the employees will be more active and efficient at work, which boosts their overall performance. It reduces the risk of the onset of metabolic syndrome and chronic diseases, which may threaten the employee's safety and well-being.

The employer should empower the employees with the knowledge to make the right food choices, irrespective of where they work. It is also important to recognise that each employee and worksite is unique.

Most employees forget to hydrate themselves because they are too busy working. This will lead to dehydration, potentially affecting attention and working memory and increasing tension/anxiety, especially for those working in hot, humid conditions. The employers should provide clean drinking water at the work site and adequate water breaks.

Employees extensively use caffeinated beverages like coffee and tea to improve alertness, uplift mood and overall performance. Used in moderation, i.e., 400 mg/day / 1-3 mg/ day, caffeine is helpful, but if taken in higher dosages (>500 mg/day) may lead to possible side effects. Recently there has been an increase in the use of energy drinks/ caffeine-containing drinks, and consumption of these sugary drinks may lead to dehydration and an increased risk of obesity.

It is common to see employees working overtime, in erratic work schedules, and on rotational shift work. These work patterns, in turn, affect their eating behaviour and nutritional status. This is one of the key focus areas for Nutra-ergonomics. Employers should adopt the strategies below to improve their employees' overall well-being.

1. Provision of fresh, nutritionally balanced meals and snacks focused on adequate fiber and protein content to regulate satiety levels.
2. Sufficient meal breaks for employees to practice mindful eating.
3. Providing active breaks for employees to be physically active at work.
4. Having a reward system in place wrt employees practicing healthy eating.
5. Organizing cooking demos on healthy and easy cooking
6. Availability of dietitian/ nutritionist services for employees to make an informed decision on their health.

It finally boils down to employees making the right decisions to lead a healthy lifestyle, but employers should make the opportunity available.

### **About Our Speaker:**

Harshitha BK

Harshitha (MSc.) is a clinical nutritionist currently working at Recoup Health, Bengaluru. She has worked in different fields of Nutrition. Diabetes management is her area of speciality and she is a certified diabetes educator. Her expertise also lies in nutrition, lifestyle disorders, and women's health of every age.