

# Study: Long hours affect what family eats at home

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Irregular work schedules, long hours, job dissatisfaction and other such working conditions of parents in low-income families significantly impact family food choices, according to a new Cornell study.

These conditions as well as the lack of access to healthy foods prompt many parents to use such coping strategies as eating takeout meals, missing meals and serving prepared entrees, reports Carol Devine, a professor of nutritional sciences at Cornell, in the September issue (41:5) of the *Journal of [Nutrition Education and Behavior](#)*. Ultimately, Devine said, parents' choices can impact their children's diets.

"Long work hours and irregular schedules mean more time away from family, less time for household food work, difficulty in maintaining a regular meal pattern and less opportunity to participate in family meals," Devine explained. "This situation may result in feelings of time scarcity, fatigue and strain that leave parents with less personal energy for food and meals."

The study found that fathers who worked long hours or had non-standard schedules were more likely to use takeout meals, miss family meals, purchase prepared entrees and eat while working. Working mothers in the study who worked under similar conditions purchased [restaurant meals](#) or prepared entrees or missed breakfast significantly more often than other women. About a quarter of mothers and fathers said they did not have access to healthful, reasonably priced or good-tasting food at or

near work.

These challenges could be alleviated with such worksite interventions as improving access to healthy foods and adapting hours and schedules to give employees more time for healthy [meals](#), Devine said.

Co-authors include Tracy Farrell, extension associate; Margaret Jastran, research aide; Cornell Professors Elaine Wethington, and Carole Bisogni; and Christine Blake, Ph.D. '06, now at the University of South Carolina.

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Provided by Cornell University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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