



Packing Healthy Lunches

You've done a great job of starting your day with a healthy and filling breakfast. So what to do about lunch? With little time to spare to plan and pack a healthy lunch, too many of us rely on the convenience of fast food and take-out OR skip lunch in order to get more work done. Two unhealthy options that put you at risk for gaining weight or maintaining an unhealthy weight.

Spread It Out

In general, people who spread their meals throughout the day seem to be better able to control their eating. They are less likely to feel hungry and less likely to overeat in the evening. So by eating breakfast and lunch every day, you can help yourself lose weight as well as maintain better control of your eating throughout the day and night.



Getting the Most

To get the most out of your lunch time meal, choose something with a source of lean protein (white meat turkey or chicken, fish, egg whites, beans or low fat dairy), complex carbohydrates (100% whole wheat bread or a wrap, fruit, brown rice, oats, etc) and some healthy fats (avocado, nuts or seeds, olive oil, peanut butter, etc).

Go Green!

Salads are a great choice for lunch but can be overloaded with calories if you aren't careful. Use low calorie or reduced fat dressing and ask for it on the side when ordering out. Also ask the kitchen to hold the cheese, croutons and olives in order to save additional calories. If you're grabbing a salad at a salad bar, stock up on the veggies and add a source of lean protein like tuna, turkey, hardboiled egg whites or beans.

The Tried and True Sandwich

Make your sandwich with lean meats like chunk light tuna w/ reduced calorie mayo or mustard, chicken or turkey (look for reduced sodium deli meat at your local grocery store). Focus on fiber and use whole wheat bread, wraps or pitas rather than white bread. Look for 100% whole wheat as the first ingredient, If it says "enriched" it isn't whole wheat. Save yourself unnecessary calories by substituting mustard or a low calorie dressing for mayonnaise. Finally, pair your sandwich with a small salad, cup of vegetable soup, or a piece of fruit and some veggies like carrot sticks. If veggies or fruit isn't available, choose pretzels or baked chips over traditional potato chips.



Think Outside the Box

Think outside of the box and look to breakfast or dinner for inspiration. Cook omelettes ahead of time with one whole

egg, a few egg whites and your favorite veggies and heat it up at work for a protein packed lunch. Have some fresh berries or other fruit on the side. Cottage cheese is another high protein food that isn't just for breakfast anymore. Choose low fat and reduced sodium cottage cheese if it's available. Add some fresh berries or canned peaches (packed in juice not syrup) and some cinnamon for a tasty and filling lunch. Pair it with whole wheat toast and a tablespoon of peanut butter. Last night's leftovers also make an easy and convenient lunch when you're pressed for time.

Eating on the run?

Look up nutritional information online for your favorite fast food chain or restaurant and plan the healthiest meal ahead of time. If this isn't an option, ask the restaurant staff for a nutrition guide for their menu before you order. Pay attention to portion sizes. Many restaurants' portions are very large. Ask your server to bring a "to go" box with your food so when it arrives you can immediately create a healthy portion for you and set the rest aside as leftovers for tomorrow. This will help you from overeating. Out of sight, out of mind!

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www.mypyramid.gov
www.sparkpeople.com
www.5aday.gov

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