

LUNCH On-The-Go

Want a lunch that packs a nutrient punch? A balanced middle-of-the-day meal starts with smart choices from all five food groups: lean proteins, whole grains, colorful fruits, vibrant vegetables, and low-fat dairy foods. This could be a tuna sandwich (light mayo) on whole wheat with sliced tomato, plus a sliced pear and fat-free milk. Try a cup of black bean soup and a whole-wheat quesadilla (using part-skim mozzarella cheese and fresh salsa), with a side of sweet strawberries.

PLAN

The benefits of a balanced lunch are worth the time and effort for adults and children alike. According to research, how you eat may be just as important as what you eat. Eating slowly and listening to your internal signals of fullness may help prevent afternoon tummy aches - and help you maintain a healthy weight at the same time!

Lunch at work: In a time-crunched, budget-conscious world, brown bagging it may be best. Take a break from work while you eat - and go for a walk afterward.

Lunch at fast food: Although it's possible to overdo calories, fat, and sugar, smart choices are now available in most chains. Choose milk and fruit in kid-size meals.

Lunch at a restaurant: More and more restaurants will also feature nutrition info on menus. Most chains already provide nutrition analyses on their websites.

EAT

Always start small: Most serving sizes in the U.S. are two to three times what most adults need. By choosing a cup of soup or half a sandwich, you'll usually get plenty of food and you may save money too. Kid-size burgers are actually great for adults too.

Share, share, share: This is another easy way to control your food budget and avoid wasting food at the same. For a satisfying and cost-conscious lunch, share a sandwich or an entrée salad with a couple of sides (maybe even a small French fries).

Rethink your drink: A large soft drink or fancy coffee concoction can quickly add several hundred extra calories to your day. Smart choices for refreshing mealtime beverages include fat-free milk (regular or chocolate), unsweetened tea, and ice water.

ENJOY

Take time to sit and enjoy your lunch. Put down your work and enjoy a calming conversation with a friend or coworker. When you savor your lunch and listen to your stomach, it is easier to stop when you are satisfied.