

What's for lunch?

Brown-bag essentials

Bringing your own food is a great way to get a healthy lunch — and it keeps your wallet healthy, too.

What to pack

To get the most out of your lunch, be creative and aim for variety.

- Toss a green salad with carrots, bell peppers, and tomatoes. Top with tuna, a chicken breast, or kidney beans and balsamic vinaigrette. Bring along apple slices with peanut butter.
- Fill a whole-wheat pita pocket or tortilla with chicken or egg salad (easy on the mayo), or low-fat cheese with red onion, tomato, and avocado. Pack a handful of grapes for dessert.
- Pair a cup of bean soup with a green salad topped with olive oil and vinegar or lemon juice. Add 4 whole-grain crackers and a peach.
- Dip broccoli, bell pepper, and cucumber slices into hummus. Enjoy 1 cup of strawberries with fat-free yogurt.

Lunch planning

Can't seem to get into the habit? The more you do it, the easier it becomes to pack yourself a lunch. Try these tips to keep it simple.

- Plan your lunches at the beginning of each week. Add foods to your shopping list that will create a healthy and delicious lunch.
- Keep a supply of convenient, easy-to-grab items on hand, such as low-fat cheese sticks, yogurt, baby carrots, and crackers.
- If you don't have all you need for a complete lunch, bring part of your lunch and buy a healthy addition to go with it. Buy an apple or small salad to go with your sandwich, or get a scoop of tuna to top your bagged salad greens.
- Share lunch-making duties with your family. Create a weekly rotation so everyone gets a chance to decide what's on the menu.
- Be sure to pack your lunch in an insulated bag with reusable ice packs for food safety.

Take a few minutes to write down a lunch menu for the next 3 days. With a little creativity and planning, you can have healthy lunches all week long.