



## How to Pack Your Lunch for Optimum Weight Loss

While bringing lunch from home can be healthier than heading out at noon, it doesn't mean it's automatically the magic key to dropping pounds. Follow these three tips when packing lunch to ensure you lose weight.

### 1. Fill It With These Two Things

While a sandwich is one of the most popular choices on the bagged lunch menu, it's not necessarily the best choice for weight loss. Carbs may fill you up, but they can also make your brain foggy and your body feel heavy — which means feeling too tired for that afternoon run and an increased craving for a sugary pick-me-up later. Instead, go for fiber and protein. The fiber takes longer to digest so hunger pangs won't cause you to reach for more calories soon after lunch ends. And the protein will sustain your energy. Aim for at least 10 grams of fiber and at least 15 grams of protein.

### 2. Do the Math

Since weight loss is a matter of calories in vs. calories used up, it's important to count calories to make sure you're not exceeding your daily limit. Have a

specific number in mind for each meal and snack so you don't mindlessly pack lunch — remember that even healthy foods can be high in calories. Depending on your daily calorie intake, this midday meal should be between 400 and 500 calories. Use a website such as Calorie King to help you add up your food, Calorie Count for recipes, or a trusted calorie-counting app to help you keep track of the rest of your meals and snacks.

### 3. Open Up and Smile

There's already a lot to consider: lunch needs to be healthy and filling, it needs to be low in calories, but it also has to taste good so that you want to eat it and feel satisfied when you're done. You have the best intentions when packing a baby kale salad, but if your taste buds aren't into it, your cravings will convince you to find something better. Speak to your specific desires, and find healthy ways to quench them. That may mean finding ways to lighten up your favorite comfort foods or throwing in a few squares of dark chocolate to satisfy your postmeal sweet tooth.

Here's a sample lunch that utilizes all three of these tips. In the vegan lunch shown in the photo above, the salad is packed with grapes for added fiber and topped with chickpeas and sunflower seeds for additional protein. On the top right is quinoa mixed with black beans, which offers even more fiber and protein. On the bottom right, there are fresh apple slices (more fiber) smeared with homemade mixed nut butter (more protein plus healthy fats) to satisfy dessert cravings. Here's the breakdown:

#### **Salad w/ Quinoa and apple Treat:**

- 2 cups baby spinach
- 10 carrot slices
- 5-inch celery stalk
- 5 cherry tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chickpeas
- 8 grapes
- 1/2 tablespoon sunflower seeds
- 1/3 cup cooked quinoa
- 1/4 cup black beans
- 1/4 apple
- 1 tablespoon mixed nut butter

Lunch Total: 462 calories, 15 grams fiber, 18.5 grams protein