



6 simple tips for smarter, healthier lunches

What can you do to get the most out of your mid-day meal? You can start by choosing healthy options and keeping your portions under control so you won't overeat. Finding the right balance will help keep you full, alert and energized throughout the rest of the day.

Follow these other healthy lunch tips that will help you stay on the right track:

TIP #1: Bag the buffet.



Buffet lunch restaurants and all-you-can-eat salad bars seem like a good deal, but you may want to think about the results. We always overeat. The more we put on our plates, the more we tend to eat. If you dine out at lunch often, skip the buffet option.

TIP #2: Love your leftovers.



Packing a lunch is always a great idea. You can pick and choose healthy foods to help you lose weight. Plus, you can save money. When you have healthy leftovers in your fridge, chances are you'll throw them out if they sit too long. Bring them to work. This will allow you to control your portions and stay on track. To get started, pick one day a week to do it, and stick to it. Little steps add up to a healthier lifestyle.

TIP #3: Cut back on sandwiches.



We love our sandwiches, but we often eat too many of them. This results in too much bread, too much mayonnaise and too much sodium and fat from processed meats. If you can't take them off the menu all together, pick a few days a week to have a sandwich as a treat. You can also go with the half-sandwich/salad or soup option. To make your sandwiches healthier, try multigrain bread with reduced-fat cheese. Spice them up with hummus or mustard, instead of mayonnaise. Skip the bacon, and use salad greens instead of iceberg lettuce.

TIP #4: Skip the chips.



We often use chips as a go-to side with our sandwiches. But they're high in fat, sodium and carbs. So if you're a chip lover, try choosing a salad or fruit a few times a week to make a big difference.

TIP #5: Pass on the pop.



Sugary drinks will pack on the pounds if you drink a lot of them. Even diet drinks have little to no nutritional value. Choose unsweetened ice tea and add your own sweetener. Of course, water is always a good choice. Try sparkling water with a splash of juice.

TIP #6: Don't sabotage your salad.



Salads are healthy, but not when they're smothered in unhealthy dressings. Most processed salad dressings are high in sodium and saturated fat. For example, many chicken Caesar salads are high in calories because of the croutons, dressing and cheese. Go for the vinaigrette dressing (oil, balsamic vinegar, Dijon mustard and salt and pepper). Cut the croutons, and bag the bacon bits.