

Lunch Planning Guide

Use this planning guide before you go shopping to help you create your lunch menu. It also offers a portion guide and healthy tips for each of the five basic food groups.

Fruits

Recommended portion: 1/2 - 1 cup

Healthy Tips

- Refrigerate cut-up fruit to store for later.
- Buy fresh fruits in season when they may be less expensive and at their peak flavor.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or juice).
- Consider convenience when shopping. Buy pre-cut packages of fruit (such as melon or pineapple chunks).
- Choose packaged fruits that do not have added sugars.
- When choosing canned fruits, select fruit canned in 100% fruit juice or water.
- Individual containers of fruits like peaches or applesauce are easy and convenient.
- Dried fruits also make a great snack. They are easy to carry and store well. Because they are dried, 1/4 cup is equivalent to 1/2 cup of other fruits.
- Keep a package of dried fruit in your desk or bag. Some fruits that are available dried include apricots, apples, pineapple, bananas, cherries, figs, cranberries, dates, blueberries, prunes (dried plums), and raisins (dried grapes).

Milk & Dairy

Recommended portion: 1 cup

Healthy Tips

- Choose fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese. If you choose milk or yogurt that is not fat-free, or cheese that is not low-fat, the fat in the product will provide “hidden” calories. Be sure to read the labels and adjust your calorie consumption for the remainder of the day accordingly.
- If sweetened milk products are chosen (flavored milk, yogurt, drinkable yogurt, desserts), the added sugars will also have extra calories that should be counted toward your daily allowance.
- For those who are lactose intolerant, lactose-free and lower-lactose products are available. These include hard cheeses and yogurt. Also, enzyme preparations can be added to milk to lower the lactose content. Calcium-fortified foods and beverages such as soy beverages or orange juice may provide calcium, but may not provide the other nutrients found in milk and milk products.

Vegetables

Recommended portion: 1-2 cups.

Healthy Tips

- Buy fresh vegetables in season. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave.
- Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare. Pick up pre-washed bags of salad greens and add baby carrots or grape tomatoes for a salad in minutes. Buy packages of carrots or celery sticks for quick snacks.
- Prepare more foods from fresh ingredients to lower sodium intake. Most sodium in the food supply comes from packaged or processed foods.
- Buy canned vegetables labeled “no salt added.” If you want to add a little salt it will likely be less than the amount in the regular canned product.
- The next time you grill - make some vegetable kabobs as part of the meal and use the leftovers for your lunch the next day.
- Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables in a see-through container in the refrigerator. Carrot and celery sticks are traditional, but consider broccoli florets, cucumber slices, or red or green pepper strips.

Grains

Recommended portion: 2 oz.

Healthy Tips

- Eat whole-wheat bread instead of white bread or brown rice instead of white rice.
- For a change, try brown rice or whole-wheat pasta. Try brown rice stuffing in baked green peppers or tomatoes and whole-wheat macaroni in macaroni and cheese.
- Create a whole grain pilaf with a mixture of barley, wild rice, brown rice, broth and spices. For a special touch, stir in toasted nuts or chopped dried fruit.
- Use whole – Try rolled oats or a crushed, unsweetened whole grain cereal as breading for baked chicken, fish, veal cutlets, or eggplant parmesan.
- Try an unsweetened, whole grain ready-to-eat cereal as croutons in salad or in place of crackers with soup.
- Choose foods that name one of the following whole-grain ingredients first on the label’s ingredient list:
 - “brown rice”
 - “bulgur”
 - “graham flour”
 - “oatmeal”
 - “whole oats”
 - “whole rye”
 - “whole wheat”
 - “wild rice”
 - “whole-grain corn”
- Foods labeled with the words such as “multi-grain,” “stone-ground,” “100% wheat,” “cracked wheat,” “seven-grain,” or “bran” are usually not truly whole-grain products.
- Color is not an indication of a whole grain. Bread can be brown because of molasses or other added ingredients. Read the ingredient list to see if it is whole-grain.

Protein: Meats & Beans

Recommended portion: 3 oz.

Healthy Tips

- The leanest beef cuts include round steaks and roasts (round eye, top round, bottom round, round tip), top loin, top sirloin, and chuck shoulder and arm roasts.
- The leanest pork choices include pork loin, tenderloin, center loin, and ham.
- Choose extra lean ground beef. The label should say at least “90% lean”. You may be able to find ground beef that is 93% or 95% lean.
- Buy skinless chicken, or take off the skin before cooking.
- Boneless, skinless chicken breasts and turkey cutlets are the leanest poultry choices.
- Choose lean turkey, roast beef, ham, or low-fat/low sodium luncheon meats for sandwiches instead of those containing more fat and salt, such as regular bologna or salami.
- Choose dry beans or peas as a main dish or part of a meal often. Some choices are:
 - Chili with kidney or pinto beans
 - Stir-fried tofu
 - Split pea, lentil, minestrone, or white bean soups
 - Baked beans
 - Black bean enchiladas
 - Garbanzo or kidney beans on a chef’s salad
 - Rice and beans
 - Veggie burgers or garden burgers
 - Hummus (chickpeas) spread on pita bread
- Choose nuts as a snack, on salads, or in main dishes. Use nuts to replace meat or poultry, not in addition to these items:
 - Use pine nuts in pesto sauce for pasta
 - Add slivered almonds to steamed vegetables
 - Add toasted peanuts or cashews to a vegetable stir-fry instead of meat
 - Sprinkle a few nuts on top of low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt
 - Add walnuts or pecans to a green salad instead of cheese or meat.

Refer to the
“How Much Is A Serving?”
chart for each food group.

