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: ½ - 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.
- Dry 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, walnuts, prunes (dried plums), and raisins (dried grapes).

Vegetables

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 canned milk products are chosen (flavored milk, yogurt, drinkable milk, 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 used to add 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 all of the other nutrients found in milk and milk products.
- Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables in a see-through container in the refrigerator. Carrot and celery sticks are an easy and convenient snack. Raw vegetables can also be purchased in small, resealable plastic bags in supermarkets. These bags can be placed in the refrigerator for storage.
- Add nuts to your diet. Choose nuts as a snack, on salads, or in main dishes. Use nuts to replace meat or poultry, not in addition to meats. Some choices are:
  - Dried cherries, dates, prunes, or raisins
  - Almonds, peanuts, pecans, Brazil nuts, cashews, walnuts, or pistachios
  - Nuts in pesto sauce for pasta

Grains

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 fresh 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.
- Foods labeled with the words such as “multi-grain,” “stone-ground,” “100% whole wheat,” “bran” are usually not truly whole grain products.
- Choose foods that name one of the following whole-grain ingredients first on the label’s ingredient list:
  - “brown rice” “bulgur”
  - “shredded wheat” “oatmeal”
  - “steel cut oats” “whole rye” “white wheat” “wild rice”

Protein: Meats & Beans

Recommended portion: 3 oz

Healthy Tips:
- 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 sausage.
- 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 used to add milk to lower the lactose content.
- Use whole — Try rolled oats or a crushed, unsweetened whole grain ready-to-eat cereal as breading for baked chicken, fish, vegetable or eggplant parmesan.
- Try an unsweetened, whole grain ready-to-eat cereal as a snack or in place of crackers with soup.
- Choose meats that name one of the following protein ingredients first on the label’s ingredient list:
  - “chicken” “pork” “lamb” “fish”
  - “beef” “turkey” “ham” “salami”

Sodium

- Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables in a see-through container in the refrigerator. Carrot and celery sticks are an easy and convenient snack. Raw vegetables can also be purchased in small, resealable plastic bags in supermarkets. These bags can be placed in the refrigerator for storage.
- Add nuts to your diet. Choose nuts as a snack, on salads, or in main dishes. Use nuts to replace meat or poultry, not in addition to those items:
  - Use low-fat or non-fat cheese or meat.
  - Use low-fat or non-fat cheese or meat.

- Choose meats that name one of the following protein ingredients first on the label’s ingredient list:
  - “chicken” “pork” “lamb” “fish”
  - “beef” “turkey” “ham” “salami”

- Use meat or poultry, not in addition to those items:
  - Use low-fat or non-fat cheese or meat.
  - Use low-fat or non-fat cheese or meat.

- Choose meats that name one of the following protein ingredients first on the label’s ingredient list:
  - “chicken” “pork” “lamb” “fish”
  - “beef” “turkey” “ham” “salami”

- Use meat or poultry, not in addition to those items:
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