



SCHNECK

Better Healthcare Begins Here

IT'S IN THE BAG

Brown bag it! Bringing your own lunch or meals “to go” can help to cut costs and keep you and your family healthy. Though it’s easy to run to restaurants, fast-food joints, or cafeterias, the portion sizes and extras (like French fries) are incredibly fattening. Eating this kind of fare routinely can be unhealthy and expensive. Lunch can cost upwards of \$10 per day, while that morning latte can be \$4 or more, and it adds up quickly. Packing your own food gives you control over ingredients, portions, and your budget.

One of the most daunting aspects of packing your own food is deciding what to make. The best lunch would consist of equal portions of lean protein, whole grain, veggies, and fruit, with a single serving of low-fat dairy. Low-fat protein and fiber from whole grains, beans, nuts, fruits, and vegetables will help to give you the energy you need to get through the day and keep you full until dinner. As you shop, try to buy foods that are as close to their original form and have as few ingredients as possible. Processed foods are often changed dramatically from their natural form and tend to be high in sugars and fats, contain artificial ingredients and chemicals, and lack important vitamins and nutrients.

Here are some options to get you started:

Leftovers: Leftovers are a great choice for lunch or when you are on the go because they require almost no prep and you still have control over the ingredients and portion sizes. When you cook dinner, make a little extra to pack into a microwave-safe container. Just add a fresh fruit and vegetable, and you have an easy and nutritious meal.

Sandwiches: A classic lunch staple, a sandwich can range from basic to gourmet. For variety, try different whole-grain breads, wraps, and pitas, and fill with low-fat proteins like tuna, lean meats, cheese, or sliced eggs. Have fun trying different greens and vegetables in your sandwiches, like onion, cucumber, carrots, peppers, sprouts, and tomatoes. For something different, add sunflower or sesame seeds or some fresh hummus.

Salad: Make a salad into a meal by adding lean meats, feta, beans, nuts, or seeds. Add some dried cranberries or thin slices of apple, pear, or mandarin for a sweet or tart flavor, depending on your tastes. Olive oil and vinegar, light sesame dressings, and light or balsamic vinaigrettes are a great alternative to higher-fat dressings. "On the side" isn't just for restaurants! Packing your dressing separately allows you to control your serving size and reduce your caloric intake.

Chili or soup: Try cooking up a large pot of chili or soup on the weekend, then freeze individual-sized portions for an easy lunch to grab on your way out in the morning. Just grab some carrots and a piece of fruit to round out your meal.

Rice and beans: Rice and beans are a satisfying, filling staple. Try adding different seasonings and ingredients for everything from Mexican to Italian flavors. You can even add some lettuce and wrap the ingredients in a whole-wheat tortilla for a healthier taco.

Are you ready to break out of your worst eating habits? Talk to your doctor about creating a nutrition plan, or get a referral for a nutrition specialist to begin planning healthy meals for the whole family!

Sources: uhc.com
pbs.org
nlm.nih.gov

A lot of foods are advertised as "healthy" as the demand for nutritious foods and drinks rises. However, some foods aren't as healthy as you would think. Despite package claims, many breakfast cereals and protein bars are processed, so they lose almost all of their nutritional value, and need synthetic additions. Reduced-fat peanut butter and light yogurt are "enhanced" with sugar or artificial sweeteners, often making them less healthy than the full-fat versions. Even vitamin water isn't as healthy as it would seem, with as much as 32 grams of sugar. When your food packaging claims your food is "healthy," always take a peek at the label to make sure you are eating your healthiest.

Typical fast-food lunch

	Food Item	Cost	Number of Calories
	Combo meal with: Quarter-pound cheeseburger	\$5.59	510 calories
	Large fries	Extra charge \$0.70	380 calories
	Medium soda (32 ounces)	Included in combo price	210 calories
	1 chocolate chip cookie	\$1.00	160 calories
		Total cost = \$7.29	Total calories = 1,260

Typical lunch from home

	Food Item	Cost	Number of Calories
	Turkey sandwich on whole-wheat bread with mustard, lettuce, and tomato	\$1.09	200 calories
	Water	free	0 calories
	Medium apple	\$0.65	70 calories
	1 large graham cracker square	\$0.28	59 calories
		Total cost = \$2.02	Total calories = 329