

Brown Bag Lunches

Adapted for those with inborn errors of metabolism by Monica A. Cengia, MEd, RD, LD, CDE, VitaFlo Dietitian

Here are some quick and easy tips to help you pack a safe and healthy lunch – join the “make your own lunch” bunch!!

MAKE IT SAFE

- Use an insulated lunch bag with a freezer pack to keep cold foods cold. Holding perishable foods at room temperature for longer than two hours allows bacteria to grow and could make the food unsafe to eat.
- Freeze well-wrapped sandwiches at the beginning of the week or the night before. Pack them in the morning; they will be thawed by lunch. Good “freezers” are low protein cheese spreads and low protein bread items. Raw vegetables do not freeze as well. Pack those separately and add when ready to eat.
- Store your low protein sandwich bread or low protein tortilla wrap in the freezer. Using frozen bread to make your sandwiches in the morning will help keep your sandwich filling colder and fresher until lunch.
- Freeze fruit juice jugs, gelatin cups or fruit cups. Wrap in foil and use as an ice pack in the lunch box or bag. They will help keep foods cold and taste refreshing at lunch which means they are more likely to be eaten.

MAKE IT HEALTHY

- Use your list of allowed foods to plan your lunch. Include at least 2 servings of low protein bread or grains and 2 servings of the fruits and vegetables for a balanced meal. Include a treat like **VitaBites** (low protein snack or treat bar). Pack the midday protein drink like **VitaFlo!** Just empty the packet contents into a water bottle or small juice jug, shake 60 seconds & drink it down to be sure that all vital nutrients are included at lunchtime. It’s fast, easy, tasty, mixes smooth, does not require refrigeration & is a small amount to drink.
- Go for variety. Try low protein bagels, crackers, pita bread, tortillas, quick breads or muffins paired with your favorite low protein cheese spread or slices or veggie fillings. Keep an assortment of fruit cups and alternate like: fruit cocktail, pineapple chunks, pear bits and applesauce cups. Put some whipped topping in a small plastic cup or container to dip fresh or canned fruit. Be creative and lunch will be fun!
- Make small sandwich bags of low protein items like: low protein tortilla chips, pita chips, cookies and pretzels at the beginning of the week and store in an airtight container for easy packing all week long.
- Pack fruit that is easy to eat. Grapes, strawberries, chunks of melon, apple wedges, and orange sections are all good choices. Cut up fruit to make it more appealing and a finger food. Keep fruit rollups handy.
- Raw vegetables such as baby carrots, celery and bell pepper strips are more likely to be eaten if they are packed with a container of ranch dressing or salsa. Look for individual packages in the produce section.
- Sneak vegetables in wherever you can. Try grating a carrot into your sandwich or salad. Add fresh crispy leaves of spinach or romaine lettuce to your sandwich. Pack a low protein pasta salad with vegetables or a thermos of vegetable soup. Carrot or zucchini low protein muffins make a healthy sweet treat.
- Creative tasty ideas can be found on websites like www.cambrookefoods.com where low protein items that taste good and are handy for busy families are the job #1!!

MAKE IT FUN FOR KIDS

- Involve your child in planning and preparing lunches. Provide some choices and let them decide what to pack that day. Let them help pack the lunch, especially items that can be packed the night before.
- Make a “lunchable” using a divided plastic container. Use as lots of colors to fill each section.
- Make a homemade “happy meal” by including a special note, sticker or a mix of gumdrops and jelly beans.

MAKE IT EASY

- Keep lunch-making supplies together in one place in the kitchen. Include lunch bags, sandwich bags, juice jugs, small storage containers or cups for dips or whipped topping, plastic silver wear and quick foods like such as individual cans of fruit or **VitaBites**.
- Pack your lunches the night before so you can avoid that early morning rush.
- Write down lunch menu ideas for one week. After planning 2-3 weeks worth of lunches you can rotate the menus throughout the year. Lunch will always be a welcomed meal and more likely to all be eaten too!!

