

# From the Food Bank Kitchen

## GOT LUNCH?

Last week we covered the topic of breakfast – how important it is to start the day with a healthy balanced meal to provide our bodies with energy for the day. But how many of us run out the door to work or school without thinking ahead about lunch? Picking up food from convenience stores or fast food places usually ends up costing us in calories, sodium and fat, let alone making a dent in our wallets over time. Skipping lunch altogether or snacking throughout the day on junk isn't a healthy path either. Packing your lunch the night before will help you feel less rushed in the morning.

### Let's compare 4 potential lunch choices:

**From home:** Turkey-breast sandwich (3 oz turkey) on whole-grain bread or wrap with mustard, lettuce and tomato; fat-free light yogurt with sliced peaches, brewed lemon iced tea, unsweetened

**McDonald's:** Quarter Pounder with Cheese, Medium fries (**Sandwich** alone: 510 calories, 1190 mg sodium, and 26 gm fat)

**Dunkin Donuts:** Tuna Melt sandwich on croissant

**Panera Bread:** Sierra Turkey on Asiago Cheese Focaccia (Note: Smoked Ham & Swiss on Rye is

\$5.99 and has 590 calories, 17 gm fat, 8 gm sat fat and 64 gm carbs but still has 1870 mg of sodium)

By planning ahead and BYOL (**B**ringing **Y**our **O**wn **L**unch) you eat more nutritiously and save money.

**CAUTION:** Beware of added calories and sugar when you also order a beverage such as a soda (20 oz Pepsi = 230 calories and 62 gm sugar), fruit juice or drink (average 16 oz = 200-250 calories), or a pre-sweetened prepared coffee beverage.

**KEEP FOODS SAFE:** Wash hands, containers and utensils before handling food. Keep foods cold so bacteria won't grow. Put an ice pack next to items that need to be kept cool in an insulated lunch box if you can't refrigerate food promptly.

| Nutrients and Cost of 4 Lunches |           |            |               |              |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|--------------|
|                                 | From home | McDonald's | Dunkin Donuts | Panera Bread |
| Calories                        | 425       | 890        | 630           | 920          |
| Total Fat (gm)                  | 4         | 45         | 40            | 49           |
| Saturated Fat (gm)              | 1         | 14         | 14            | 12           |
| Sodium (mg)*                    | 430       | 1460       | 900           | 1900         |
| Carbs (gm)                      | 45        | 88         | 42            | 79           |
| Protein (gm)                    | 37        | 33         | 19            | 40           |
| Cost                            | \$3.25    | \$6.29     | \$4.25        | \$6.89       |

\* According to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines, the average, healthy person should consume no more than 2300mg of sodium per day.

## What Can I Bring from home?

Focus on whole grains, lean proteins, fruits and veggies. Here are a few suggestions:

Sandwich on whole-grain bread (light has half the calories and carbs) with protein such as peanut or soynut butter, cheese, ham, turkey, tuna, or chicken salad; handful of raw veggies like carrots, pepper strips, baby tomato or cucumber, fresh or portion-packed canned fruit, and handful of baked chips or pretzels with maximum of 100 calories

Greek yogurt (fat-free), 2 T nuts, 1 cup melon cubes, berries or grapes, and a whole grain granola bar (125 calories max).

Green tossed salad with 1/2 cup scoop of tuna, egg or chicken salad, hummus, OR any combination of deli ham, turkey, cheese, hard-boiled egg, beans or chickpeas with light dressing; whole grain crackers or mini-rice cakes, and fruit

Combine cooked pasta with canned tuna, salmon, or cooked chicken breast with baby tomatoes; drizzle with vinaigrette dressing. Optional additions: feta cheese, chopped sun-dried tomatoes, cucumber, olives, chopped red onion.

Cut up leftover chicken, fish, beef, pork, or tofu and add this plus 1/2 –1 cup canned or frozen vegetables and any leftover beans, rice, pasta and potatoes into a cup of low or reduced-sodium store-bought broth or tomato soup. Use microwave-safe container and reheat food thoroughly. If desired, top with parmesan cheese.

Source: Diane Alpern, RD, LDN, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts