

Make the most of your midday meal



Diabetes
New Zealand

We can be creatures of habit, having the same for lunch day after day, week after week, year after year. How about experimenting with some different lunches? **Alison Pask**, a New Zealand registered dietitian, suggests healthy choices to try at midday.

Think about injecting some variety into your lunches as this will help you follow the healthy eating guidelines as suggested by health professionals.

Making your own lunch is the only way to know exactly what you are eating. This will make sure your lunch doesn't contain any restricted items and will cost less than buying meals.

It is worth taking time to prepare a suitable lunch. Don't fall into the trap of thinking you are too busy, have too many meetings or aren't hungry.

Lunch is one of your main meals and eating at regular times is an important tool for managing your diabetes. You'll also find you have more energy and be more productive.

Adding variety

Consider using different breads such as pita, wholegrain, wholemeal, naan, sourdough, pumpernickel, rye, bagels or fruit bread.

Freeze the bread and take out each morning. This way it stays fresh and you can vary your choice throughout the week.

If you have access to a microwave, options include:

- Baked beans
- Soup
- Leftovers such as stir-fry or casserole and vegetables
- Quiche (you can also eat this cold).

Many liquid items will keep well in a thermos. This is great for people on the move such as truck drivers, plumbers, builders or salespeople.

Sportspeople can also use a thermos to carry a hot lunch or snack.

Freeze leftover meals in individual portions for lunches. Or make your favourite recipe and freeze it for reheating later. This also sets your portion size, preventing you from going back for seconds.

Become the envy of your mates by having homemade baking. Make a batch of approved muffins or scones and freeze them. Each day, remove one from the freezer. It will thaw in your lunch box and not need reheating.

Four Examples of an Ideal Lunch

Bread roll with filling + a piece of fruit + a pottle of yoghurt

Homemade lentil and vegetable soup + rye bread

Quiche + homemade salad with low fat dressing

Last night's leftovers with plenty of vegetables + some carbohydrate



Sandwiches

Use your imagination to widen your range of sandwich fillings. Try cold lite baked beans if you dare! Leftover cold meat with pickle and vegetables makes yummy sandwiches. Try cold corned beef, mustard and coleslaw.

Keep your fridge stocked with low fat cheese such as mozzarella or edam and soft cheese such as cottage cheese.



Margarine or mayonnaise isn't necessary. Instead, to add extra moisture and help the filling stick together use low fat hummus, salsa or other low fat dips.

Spread cold mashed pumpkin or kumara on bread to create a delicious base for other ingredients.

7 tips for healthy lunches

- 1 Have salads all year round. During winter, use cauliflower, kumara, carrot or parsnip instead of lettuce or cabbage.
- 2 Roast winter vegetables such as pumpkin, parsnip, carrots and yams in a small amount of good quality rice bran, olive or canola oil. Pack in a container and eat cold as a salad or reheat as a hot dish. Remember to pack a fork!
- 3 Keep a box of Weet-Bix at work. While usually a breakfast food, this also makes a quick lunch.
- 4 Canned food such as fish in spring water is a good standby. Simply open the can and add the fish to a bread roll.
- 5 Nuts and seeds add extra crunch and flavour. As these are high in fat, limit to small quantities. Try a combination of:
 - Walnuts, cottage cheese and tomato
 - Grated edam cheese, pumpkin seeds, lettuce and chutney
 - Dry roasted peanuts, lite cream cheese, chicken breast and sliced red capsicums.
- 6 Try these tasty lunch ideas for variety:
 - Rice cakes with low fat toppings
 - Vegetable pieces and low fat dip
 - Fruit, unsweetened jelly and low fat, unsweetened yoghurt
 - Fresh fruit salad
 - Sushi.
- 7 There is nothing worse than a soggy tomato sandwich or a squashed filled roll. Invest in a decent lunch box to keep your food safe. Consider an insulated lunch box. School lunch boxes are great for adults too. If you don't have a fridge or freezer pads to keep your lunch cool, save yoghurt or other cold items for days when you are home.