

A HEALTHIER LUNCH BOX!

What are you having for lunch today?

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Everyday our body requires:

Energy (mostly in the form of carbohydrates)

Protein (meat, soy based, dairy, nuts, lentils/legumes, eggs)

Healthy Fats (vegetable based oils, spreads, nuts and seeds)

Fibre (grain, fruit and vegetables, beans/legumes)

Calcium (mostly dairy although there are other sources ie. Dairy free milks)

and various other vitamins/minerals etc. (fruit and vegetables)

Let's say for instance you're running short of time and have not prepared a proper lunch so you grab 2 minute noodles. Eating 2 minute noodles supplies your body with empty calories (this means there is minimal fibre, minimal protein, no vegetables or calcium- basically there is no nutritional benefit from eating this food it merely gives you a bit of energy to keep going through the day). Therefore this meal has missed an opportunity to supply your body with what it needs to function properly. It is unlikely you will make it up at other meal times. Now I'm not saying you can never have 2 minute

noodles. Just don't make it a regular occurrence and try to be aware you've missed out on a lot of important nutrients by doing so. Therefore try to have an extra healthy dinner including as much of the above list as possible.

Does what I eat for lunch really matter?

Because there are no immediate consequences of meeting these daily requirements a lot of people believe they're fine and continue to eat whatever they like. They feel fine – maybe a little more tired than usual but this then becomes their “normal”. Over the long term however, this can affect your body's ability to function properly and may lead to obesity or disease. Then you may hear the argument “well I have to die of something” but consider getting a disease such as diabetes at age 40 or 50 instead of at age 80...that's 30-40 more years having to deal with a disease and the increased health appointments and medications that go with it. Imagine adding up the cost of medication and GP visits over 40 years – you probably could have afforded that additional holiday!

Tips to healthier lunch meals:

Try to go for a complete meal i.e. vegetables, carbohydrates (wholegrain varieties of rice, pasta,

bread etc.) and a protein source: meat, lentils, beans, nuts, eggs) then add in dairy and fruit as snacks across the day and you're done. Try to stay away from meals which provide only carbohydrates – make sure you add vegetables to them – we need 5 serves or 2.5 cups per day for good health.

Some examples of a complete healthy lunch:

- *Salad sandwich* (salad vegetables, multigrain bread, ham, cheese) + piece of fruit.
- *Stir-fry chicken and vegetable noodles*, piece of fruit + yoghurt.
- *Tuna, brown rice, + vegetables* (tomato, carrot, onion, spinach etc), cheese + piece of fruit.

