

# ON TRACK WITH BARIX

Support to Keep You On Track With a Healthful Lifestyle

## Building a Better Lunch

Power up your lunch routine with some brown bag planning tips!

**E**at better, save money and use your time wisely all through the simple act of packing a lunch. To start, the additional calories in an average restaurant meal, 250, could add up to an annual 18# weight gain. If that doesn't catch your attention, there is the extra money you'll spend eating out – \$1,000 or more a year. And finally, if you add up the time spent getting to the restaurant or cafeteria, standing in line and waiting for your food, you may realize that you really do have time to make a lunch. It's amazing that such a simple habit can do so much for you.

We all know that it is a good idea to take your own lunch rather than eating out. But, even with the best of intentions, brown bag lunches can get boring and it's so easy to fall into the trap of eating out. So how can you jazz up and simplify your lunchtime routine to make taking your lunch an enjoyable habit?

A little pre-planning makes a big difference. First, make a list of your favorite healthy lunch foods. It sounds elementary, but having that list in front of you lets you see just how many options there are. Then, decide which foods you'd like to have the following week. Make sure to put the foods and ingredients on your grocery list. If you are packing for other family members, enlist their help in planning and preparation.

**Pack your lunch the night before** to keep your mornings stress-free. Another good option is to take a week's worth of lunches and stock the work refrigerator.

**Utilize healthy pre-packaged foods.** Individual packs are convenient and have the added advantage of controlling portions. Just to name a few: tuna, cottage cheese, string cheese, yogurt, fruit cups, crackers, raisins, and soup all come in single-serving packages.

Another route is to **buy foods in bulk** and then divide it up into single-serving reusable containers. This takes a bit more time and dishwashing, but is almost always a big money-saver and better for the environment.

**Leftovers** are a good lunch option. You may want to purposely prepare more for dinner meals so you'll have extra to pack. Be sure to purchase microwave-safe containers for reheating.

**Cooking in bulk** also has its merits. On your day off, make a big pot of chili or soup and freeze in individual portion containers. Make a batch of chicken salad or tuna salad, cut up veggies, or bake a batch of breakfast cookies. You may want to cycle your favorites—chicken salad this week, black bean chili next week, and beef stew the third week. That way you'll have minimal food prep time.



### Get equipped with a lunch bag.

Brown paper bags and plastic sandwich bags still work just fine, but there are lots of other options. An insulated lunch bag and a re-freezable ice pack will help your lunch to stay safe and fresh if you don't have access to a refrigerator. A lunch box with built-in dividers can work really well. Single-serving reusable containers (microwave-safe if you plan on reheating) are almost a must. Very small containers work great for veggie dip or salad dressing.

While you're at it, be sure to take along calorie-free beverages and healthy high-protein snacks to round out your work day.

**Put a little extra effort into your lunches for some extra pizzazz. Here are some ideas to keep your lunch hour fresh and exciting.**

**California Wrap** – Mix together chopped ham, shredded low-fat cheese, lettuce, tomato and low-fat Italian dressing. Wrap in a whole-wheat tortilla just prior to serving.

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**Chicken Salad** – Make your favorite low-fat version and eat it by itself, in pita bread, wrapped in a whole-wheat tortilla, with a few crackers or on light bread.

**Fluff** – Gotta love this quick easy lunch or snack treat. Sprinkle sugar-free gelatin powder on fat-free cottage cheese and add a couple tablespoons of sugar-free Cool Whip. Mix together and you have a high-protein treat. Add fruit if desired.

**Salads** – top your salad with hard-cooked eggs, thinly-sliced steak, tuna, shrimp, low-fat cheese, beans, taco meat/fat-free sour cream/avocado/salsa, or chicken for a protein-rich lunch.



**Ham Rollups** – fat-free cream cheese spread on lean deli ham, then rolled up make a delicious lunch. Add green onions if desired.

**Deli Rolls** – choose your favorite low-fat deli meat (roast beef, chicken, turkey, or ham), add your favorite accompaniments (low-fat cheese, fat-free cream cheese, veggies, and mustard) and roll up.

**Smoothie** – when you don't have time to chew well, consider a smoothie. Use milk, yogurt or protein powder as a protein source.

**Yogurt** – add a scoop of protein or some fresh fruit.

**Hummus** – eat it with pita bread, or better yet – fresh veggies.

**PB & J** – peanut butter and no-added-sugar jelly on light bread or crackers, or dip banana or apple slices in peanut butter.

**Hors d'oeuvres** – cubed lean ham and cheese with some cucumber slices and cherry tomatoes.



**Sandwiches** – Interesting sandwiches are a welcome change from the ordinary. Think wraps; chicken salad (made with fat-free Miracle Whip or mayo); or a pita stuffed with chopped turkey, lettuce, tomato and low-fat Italian dressing. Add pesto, alfalfa sprouts, avocado, fresh basil, sliced cucumbers, onions, greens, tomatoes or horseradish sauce. Cut your sandwich into small strips to remind yourself to take small bites and chew well.

**Grilled Chicken Caesar Pita** – Fill a whole-wheat pita with mixed greens, grilled chicken and light Caesar dressing.



**Tomato and Cucumber Salad** – add feta cheese, olive oil and vinegar, and tuna salad. Eat alone or in a wrap.

**Go Mexican** – stuff a pita with refried beans, salsa, lettuce and shredded cheddar cheese.

## Pizza Salad

8 oz fresh mozzarella, diced  
 4 oz extra lean ham, diced  
 3 oz thin pepperoni slices, quartered  
 1 cup grape tomatoes, halved  
 1/2 cup fresh mushrooms, sliced  
 3/4 cup green bell pepper, diced  
 1 (2.25 ounce) can sliced olives, drained  
 Small head of leafy lettuce, rinsed and chopped

Toss all ingredients together. Top with low-fat or fat-free Italian dressing (not included in nutrition information). Makes 6 servings.

**Nutrition information per serving:** 208 calories, 16 grams protein, 9 grams fat, 4 grams carbohydrate, 528 mg sodium.



## It Worked for Me

Tips from Barix Facebook Posts

“I try to take turkey slices or maybe a little bit of soup to heat up. Or if I’ve had a nice dinner the night before, I’ll take a little bit of leftovers to eat.”

— **Janis S.** as posted on Facebook

“I ALWAYS pack my lunch the night before, so I have what I need. I add extra in case I get hungry before I get home. I usually have a spinach salad with zucchini, and some kind of meat and cheese. It takes me all morning to munch on this. I take these low-carb, high-protein muffins I like. I leave the house usually by 7 and sometimes don’t get home until 5, so I don’t want to be caught without protein and low-carb foods. I also take 2 large bottles of water, a high-protein latte for my morning coffee, and a thermos of coffee with me. This gets me through breakfast, lunch and snacks without any problems. I always have peanuts in the car too.”

— **Colleen W.** as posted on Facebook

“I kept a package of cheese and a box of crackers at my desk. That way I always knew I had something healthy for lunch. Now I keep a jar of nuts in the car for those days I take longer to run errands and need something to eat.”

— **Sue D.** as posted on Facebook.

## Southwest Chopped Salad

2 cups chicken breast, cooked and shredded  
 1 green bell pepper, diced  
 1 can organic black beans, rinsed  
 1 cup frozen corn, thawed  
 2 roma tomatoes, diced  
 4 green onions, sliced  
 1 head iceberg lettuce, washed and chopped  
 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped  
 2 ripe avocados, diced  
 1 cup crushed tortilla chips  
 1/2 cup mayonnaise or Miracle Whip®  
 2/3 cup plain Greek yogurt  
 1 tbsp ranch seasoning  
 1 tbsp taco seasoning

In a large bowl, combine chicken, green pepper, black beans, corn, tomatoes, green onion, lettuce, cilantro and avocados. In a small bowl stir together mayonnaise, yogurt, ranch seasoning and taco seasoning.

Right before serving, pour dressing over salad, toss, and top with tortilla chips. Makes 8 servings.

**Nutrition information per serving:** 284 calories, 19 grams protein, 11 grams fat, 26 gram carbohydrate, 297 mg sodium



## Reward Yourself

This month, you could earn a **SPECIAL GIFT** for your “It Worked For Me” tips or recipes! Just submit as many recipes and “It Worked For Me” tips as you like. The most original and creative will be awarded a special gift from our online store. Include your name and contact info with your entry – make sure your recipes follow Barix nutritional guidelines.

Tips must be submitted by February 28, 2014 Please send comments, ideas, recipes and “It Worked For Me” tips to Deb Hart, RD, LD at [dhart@foresthealth.com](mailto:dhart@foresthealth.com).