



The G.I. Diet Express: For Busy People

By Rick Gallop

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Giving the green light to healthy weight loss even with today's fast-paced lifestyle, this guide is based on choosing foods low on the Glycemic Index scale. In addition to 50 brand-new, super-quick recipes, many time-saving tips and shopping shortcuts are included—all in a handy, accessible format.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Rick Gallop is president and CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario and the author of *The GI Diet*, *Living the GI Diet*, and *The GI Diet Pocket Guide*.

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LUNCH

For many people, lunch is one meal that is eaten away from home. This poses two challenges. First, what facilities exist for eating out or take-out in your work neighborhood and second, how much time do you have? Let's deal with each in turn.

EATING IN

This usually means taking a bagged lunch to eat at work. You will save time by not having to go out, wait on line to be served, and so on. This also has the advantage of making sure you are completely in control of what you eat. The main downside to this is that you need to set aside time to prepare food at home, though this can be more than offset by the time you will save lunching in at work.

These packed lunches are simple and uncomplicated and require minimal preparation. Most can be done the night before and kept in the refrigerator. They have been grouped into three popular categories of packed lunches: sandwiches, salads, and pasta. I've also added a fast fruit-and-dairy option when you're really pressed for time. The suggestions assume a refrigerator is available at work for food storage.

SANDWICHES

The reason sandwiches are probably the most popular international lunch is they are easy to make, portable, and have endless variation. Here are some guidelines to turn your sandwich into a convenient and filling green-light meal.

- Always use stoneground 100 percent whole-wheat or high-fiber bread
- During Phase One, sandwiches should be eaten open-faced
- Include at least three vegetables, such as lettuce, tomato, red and green bell peppers, cucumber, sprouts, or onion
- Use mustard or hummus as a spread on the bread (no regular mayonnaise or butter)
- Add four ounces of cooked lean meat or fish
- Mix canned tuna or chopped, cooked chicken with low-fat mayonnaise/salad dressing and celery
- Mixed canned salmon with malt vinegar
- To help sandwiches stay fresh, not soggy, pack components separately and assemble them just before eating, if possible

SALADS

Here is a basic salad to which you can add your choice of protein – canned tuna/salmon, sliced cooked chicken breast, lean deli ham, tofu, or even beans.

Basic Salad

Serves 2

3 cups torn or coarsely chopped salad greens, such as romaine, red leaf, mesclun, arugula, or watercress
2 small carrots, grated
1 red, yellow, or green bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and chopped
2 plum tomatoes, cut into wedges
1 cup sliced cucumber
1/2 cup chopped red or sweet white onion (Vidalia)

To serve, place the salad greens, carrot, bell pepper, tomato, cucumber, and onion in a bowl and toss to mix. Pour about 1 tablespoon of the basic vinaigrette (see below) over the salad and toss to mix.

Per serving: 1 1/2 cups greens tossed with 1 tablespoon vinaigrette.

Basic Vinaigrette**Makes about 1/2 cup**

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon dried basil
1/2 teaspoon sugar substitute
1/2 teaspoon salt
Pinch of freshly ground black pepper
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

In a medium bowl, whisk together the vinegar, mustard, basil, sugar substitute, salt, and pepper. Gradually whisk in the oil.

Storage: The vinaigrette will keep in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Tip: This vinaigrette is also good tossed with halved cherry tomatoes, cooked green beans, or asparagus.

PASTA

For a great time-saver, cook extra pasta at dinnertime and use it as the basis for a lunch or two. It will keep fresh in the refrigerator for several days. Here is a basic pasta lunch.

Basic Pasta Salad**Serves 1**

3/4 cup cooked whole-wheat pasta (spirals, shells, or similar shape)
1 cup chopped cooked vegetables (such as broccoli, asparagus, bell peppers, or scallions)
1/4 cup light tomato sauce or other low-fat or nonfat pasta sauce 4 ounces chopped cooked chicken or other lean meat, such as ground lean turkey or lean chicken sausage

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook until *al dente*, according to the package instructions. Drain the pasta and rinse under cold running water to cool.
2. Place the pasta, vegetables, tomato sauce, and chicken in a bowl and stir to mix well. Refrigerate the salad, covered, until ready to use, then reheat it in the microwave or serve chilled.

Variation: You can use the proportions here as a guide and vary the vegetables, sauce, and source of protein to suit your taste and add variety to your pasta salad lunches.

ON THE RUN

Here is a fast and filling green light option to use occasionally when you are really pushed for time.

Cottage Cheese and Fruit

Serves 1

1 cup low-fat cottage cheese

6 ounces chopped fresh fruit or canned fruit in juice, such as peaches, apricots, or pears

Place the cottage cheese and fruit in a plastic bowl with a fitted lid and stir to mix. Store in the refrigerator until lunchtime.

Add half a nutrition bar, such as a Balance or Zone bar, and you're on your way in minutes.

EATING OUT

Sandwiches

If you are under the gun and really don't have time to prepare a bagged lunch, then your best option is a take-out sandwich. Here are some tips on making sure your take-out sandwiches are green light.

- 100% whole-wheat bread
- Hummus or mustard instead of butter, margarine, or mayo
- Slices of chicken/turkey breast, ham, or tuna (avoid mayo, cheese, and bacon bits)
- Lots of vegetables – tomatoes, lettuce, bell peppers, onion rings, sprouts, etc.
- Always remove the top slice of bread and eat your sandwich open-faced

It's a good idea, too, to add a green salad to your sandwich.

FAST FOOD

Another option, if time presses is, believe it or not, a fast-food restaurant. Several of the leading restaurants have introduced menu items that are lower in fat and calories. The main caution is the amount of sodium (salt) that is often added to offset any perceived flavour loss. Another principal villain is the salad dressing, so only use half the packet and avoid creamy dressings. Just beware the minefield of red light temptations!

Here are some green light offerings in some of the major fast-food/take-out food chains.

Note: we strongly recommend that you eat all burgers and sandwiches open-faced, meaning you throw away the top slice of bread or bun. Also only use one third to half of the salad dressing that is normally provided in a packet. They contain far more dressing than you need and add unnecessary calories and salt to your meal.

SUBWAY

Subway is to be congratulated as the pacesetters in the fast-food industry with its broad range of low-fat products. They deserve a G.I. Diet gold star and warrant your support.

6" *Sandwiches* (all sandwiches included bread, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, green peppers, pickles and olives):

Ham*
Roast Beef*
Turkey Breast*
Turkey Breast and Ham*
Veggie Delite

*High sodium. If blood pressure is a concern, use only fat-free Honey Mustard/Sweet Onion sauces and replace pickles, olives with cucumbers and onions.

Roll: Wheat bread; Honey Oat.

Wraps:

Turkey Breast (high sodium)

Deli-style Sandwiches:

Ham
Roast Beef
Turkey Breast

Salads:

Grilled Chicken and Baby Spinach
Subway Club
Veggie Delite

Dressing:

Fat-free Italian

MCDONALD'S

Burgers:

Premium Grilled Chicken Classic (replace the mayo with half a packet of BBQ Sauce)

Salads:

Asian Salad with Grilled Chicken
Bacon Ranch Salad with Grilled Chicken
Caesar Salad with Grilled Chicken
California Cobb Salad with Grilled Chicken
Fruit and Walnut Salad

Dressings:

Newman's Own Low-Fat Balsamic Vinaigrette
Newman's Own Low-Fat Family Recipe Italian
Newman's Own Low-Fat Sesame Ginger

Desserts/Snacks:

Fruit'n' Yogurt Parfait (hold the granola)
Apple dippers with low-fat caramel dip

BURGER KING

Burgers/sandwiches:

Tendergrill Chicken Sandwich with Honey Mustard

Veggie Burger without mayo

Add garden salad to both

Salads:

Tendergrill Chicken Garden Salad

Tendergrill Chicken Caesar Salad

Dressings:

Italian light

Border Ranch

Dessert:

Mott's Strawberry-Flavoured Applesauce

WENDY'S

Sandwiches:

Ultimate Chicken Grill Sandwich plus side salad

Salads:

Mandarin Chicken Salad with roasted almonds

Caesar Chicken Salad with roasted almonds

Dressings:

Fat Free French

Reduced Fat Creamy Ranch

Low Fat Honey Mustard

Other:

Large Chili with side salad

TACO BELL

Tacos:

Fresco Style Chicken Ranchero Taco

Fresco Style Taco Supreme

Burritos:

Fresco Style Bean Burrito

Fresco Style Fiesta Burrito–Chicken

Fresco Style Enchirito–Beef

Fresco Style Enchirito–Chicken

Fresco Style Burrito Supreme–Chicken

Gorditas:

Fresco Style Gordita Baja–Chicken

Fresco Style Gordita Supreme–Beef

Fresco Style Gordita Supreme–Chicken

PIZZA HUT

Whereas I recommend avoiding pizza restaurants like the plague, I am delighted to see that Pizza Hut has made a real effort to introduce a line of pizzas and other foods that meet the green light criteria. Let's hope the rest of their competition follows their admirable lead.

Pizzas: (14-inch pizzas – 2 slices per serving)

Thin 'N Crispy Pizzas* – Ham, Chicken Supreme or Veggie Lover's

Fit 'N Delicious pizzas – all flavours/combos

*Note: we recommend ordering the Lower Fat Recipe versions of the Thin 'N Crispy Pizzas

Salads:

Garden Salad

Ranch Salad Kits

Dressings:

Lite Ranch

Lite Italian

ARBY'S

Sandwiches:

Hot Ham 'n Cheese

Ham and Swiss Melt

Salads:

Santa Fe with Grilled Chicken

Martha's Vineyard salad

Dressings:

Light Buttermilk Ranch

RESTAURANTS

If you do have the time for a business or working lunch, there are a few simple rules that won't make a lunch any shorter but will help keep you in the green light zone.

Eating out on the G.I. Diet is not difficult today: the trend toward the use of vegetable oils, especially olive oil, more emphasis on broiling/grilling rather than frying, a greater variety of vegetables, increased salad options, and more fish dishes – all make it even easier to dine out the green light way.

As dining out is often a social occasion, you want to be able to enjoy yourself with your friends and not feel that you are putting a damper on the occasion. So here are my top ten suggestions:

1. Don't go to lunch starving. Make sure you have a substantial mid-morning snack before you go. This will help reduce the temptation to overeat.

2. Drink water. On arrival, drink a glass of water.

3. Bread Basket. Once the standard basket of rolls or bread has been passed around, which you ignore, ask the waiter to remove whatever is left in the basket, with your co-diners' approval of course. The longer it sits there, the more tempted you will be to dig in.

4. Soup/salad. Order soup or salad first and tell the waiter you would like this as soon as possible. This will stop you from sitting there hungry while others are filling up on the bread. For soups, go for vegetable- or bean-based, the chunkier the better. Avoid cream-based soups. For salads, the golden rule is dressing on the side, as you will only use a fraction of what the restaurant would smother on. And please avoid Caesar salads that come pre-dressed.

5. Double vegetables. As you probably won't get boiled new potatoes and can't be sure what type of rice is being served, ask for a double order of vegetables instead. I have yet to find a restaurant that won't willingly oblige.

6. Meat, poultry, seafood: best options. Stick with low-fat cuts of meat (see shopping guide on page 30) or poultry – if necessary, you can remove the skin. Fish and shellfish are excellent choices but must not be breaded or battered. Remember – as servings tend to be generous in restaurants, eat only 4- to 6-ounce servings (about the size of a pack of cards) and leave the rest.

7. Sauces on side. As with salads, ask for any sauces to be put on the side.

8. Avoid desserts. Desserts are a nutritional minefield, with few green light choices on the whole. Fresh fruit and berries, if available, are your best choice, without the ice cream. Most other choices are a dietary disaster, so my best advice is to try to avoid dessert. If social pressure becomes overwhelming, or it is a special occasion, ask for extra forks so dessert can be shared. A couple of forkfuls with your coffee should get you off the hook with minimal dietary damage!

9. Decaf coffee. Only order decaffeinated coffee. Skim decaf cappuccino is our family's favourite choice.

10. Eat slowly. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, eat slowly. In the eighteenth century, the famous Dr. Johnson reportedly advised chewing food 32 times before swallowing! That's going a little overboard, but at least put your fork down between mouthfuls. The stomach takes 20—30 minutes to let the brain know it feels full. So if you eat quickly, you may be shoveling in more food than you need before the brain says stop. You will also have more time to savour your meal.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jose Goodell:

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Beverly Bell:

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