Cutting carbs and calories at lunch

August 23 2017, by Regina Boyle Wheeler, Healthday Reporter

(HealthDay)—The choices you make during your lunch hour can make—or break—your "bottom" line. Picking smart carb and calorie options will help keep your weight loss efforts on track.

First, ditch the soda. It contains a lot of sugar without providing any nutrients, says Rachel Begun, a registered dietitian and nutrition consultant. A 20-ounce bottle has more than 220 carb-laden calories while water has none. Kick your H2O up a notch with a squeeze of lemon or lime. If you're a fan of flavored bottled water, be sure to pick a sugar-free brand—or else you could be drinking your calories instead of eating them.

Brown bag it at least three days a week so you can better control sugar, salt and fat intake. Cut down on the carbs in bread by having turkey or tuna on open-faced sandwiches or tucked into lettuce roll-ups.

Pack pre-cut fruit and veggies as your sides. A whole bell pepper, cut into strips, will save you almost 120 calories over a one-ounce bag of chips, not to mention all the nutrients you'll be getting in the veggies. A half-cup of pineapple instead of three small cookies cuts your dessert calories in half without missing out on a sweet finish.

Another advantage to packing fruits and vegetables is that they're loaded with water and fiber. So, you'll feel fuller longer. And that means a lunch that will help keep you satisfied throughout the afternoon on far fewer calories.

  More information: Check out the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more ways to cut calories at every meal.

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