



livelighter.com.au

Avoiding the Junk Food trap: A resource for Health Professionals

The LiveLighter® campaign's latest phase takes aim at the effect of junk foods and drinks on health. This document includes common scenarios that lead to junk food consumption and suggested solutions to overcome the situation. There are also links to LiveLighter® recipe solutions where appropriate. We hope you find them a useful reference in media interviews, writing articles, in presentations and general Q&A sessions with the public.

Key points:

- Junk foods and drinks are not a necessary part of the diet.
- They should only be consumed occasionally, and in small amounts.
- Junk foods are associated with increased risk of obesity and chronic diseases such as heart disease, some cancers, type 2 diabetes and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.
- Junk foods are high in added sugar, salt and fat, and low in positive nutrients like vitamins, minerals and fibre.
- They are also referred to as 'energy-dense nutrient-poor' foods and drinks as they contain a lot of energy (kilojoules or Calories) and very little nutrition. Often the junk foods which are highly processed, packaged, advertised and accessible are most commonly eaten.
- Plan ahead to avoid resorting to eating junk food.
- What are you really craving? It is easy to mistake a craving of thirst for food.
- Know the cues which lead to eating junk food and take appropriate action.

Junk Food Scenario	Solution	LiveLighter® recipe suggestions
Meals		
<p>Running late to work – bought a muffin and ice coffee on the way.</p>  <p><i>Similar scenario:</i> <i>I skip breakfast because I'm not hungry at that time. I grab a chocolate bar or biscuits mid-morning instead.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare breakfast the night before that you can eat on the run. • Eat at work. Keep some breakfast food (eg cereal, bread, milk) at work. Porridge and raisin toast are quick and easy to make. • Set aside some time on the weekends to bake up a batch of homemade goods, freeze into single packs then you'll have brekkie ready to go! • Set up a fruit bowl and grab a piece of fruit as you head out. • Make a smoothie to drink or bring healthy snacks such as fruit, nuts or yoghurt to eat mid-morning. 	<p>Overnight oats https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/356/overnight-no-cook-fruity-oats</p> <p>Muesli bars https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/504/muesli-bar</p> <p>Breakfast smoothie https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/327/breakfast-smoothie</p> <p>Tropical smoothie https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/286/tropical-fruit-smoothie</p>

Morning tea with Mum – piece of banana bread.

- Go halves in the banana bread with Mum.
- Skip the café and bring over a selection of teas to sample and enjoy with homemade banana bread or muffins, or just whole fruit.
- Meet up for a walk in the park instead.
- Ask to meet-up for lunch instead. There are usually healthy lunch options at cafés whereas morning tea is often just sweets.

Banana bread
<https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/424/blueberry-and-banana-bread>

Homemade muffins
<https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/502/choose-your-own-adventure-muffins>

No time to pack lunch – bought a bakery pie and ice tea.



- Keep some food staples at work: bread in the freezer, cheese in the fridge and cans of baked bean in your drawer. This makes it easy to throw together a healthy toastie, plus it's cheaper than buying a takeaway lunch.
- Cook a little extra at dinner and pack leftovers for lunch.
- If you have to buy your lunch, choose healthier options: sushi, rice paper rolls or a sandwich/wrap with lean meat and salad.
- Choose water instead of a sugary drink.

<p>Lunch with a friend – ‘gourmet’ burger and chips with aioli</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a burger without added bacon or fried egg and that is packed with salads. • Don’t order the chips. You are likely to be full after the burger and won’t need them. • Bring your own lunch and meet in the park. 	<p>Homemade Burger https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/516/home-made-burgers</p>
<p>For those driving long distance, chips and a soft drink from a roadhouse is tempting for lunch.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t leave home without a piece of fruit and your water bottle. Pre-pack a sandwich, roll or wrap and keep it fresh in an insulated container. • If you are going to buy lunch, choose a healthier option – ask for a sandwich to be made, and make it a wholegrain base packed with salad. 	<p>Tandoori chicken wrap https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/251/tandoori-chicken-and-salad-wraps</p> <p>Curried egg sandwich https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/343/curried-egg-sandwich</p> <p>Crunchy tuna sandwich https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/121/crunchy-tuna-sandwich</p>
<p>Can’t decide what to make for dinner – get takeaway instead.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save your money and use what’s in your pantry stores first. Make the salad or vegetable dish, then think of what to go with it. • Flour and natural yoghurt = quick pizza base. Then top with your favourite toppings. • Meal planning helps reduce the 5pm panic. Eat better and save money by only buying what you need. 	<p>Easy pizza base https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/336/pizza-base</p>

Afternoon work meeting ran late – bought take-away for dinner.



- Keep some homemade meals in the freezer for ‘emergency’ nights.
- Try making double quantity meals when you are cooking and freeze the extra meal. That way you always have something on hand.
- Lasagne, cannelloni, curry, moussaka, mince fillings, casseroles, stews and soups freeze well.
- Choose healthier take-away options with vegetables and salads. Opt out of creamy dressings and deep-fried vegetables and say no to the upsize or side dishes.
- If you really don’t feel like cooking, grab a hot BBQ chicken, some grainy rolls and a bag of pre-washed salad. Easy dinner, and (minus the chicken skin) is healthy too!
- Generally, supermarkets are open until 9pm and offer a wide range of pre-prepared meals such a roast dinners, pasta or curry, served hot and ready to eat or only require reheating in the microwave. Choose a meal with lots of vegetables.
- Swing past the grocery store/supermarket for fresh chicken breast or fish and salad. Pan-frying the meat on a non-stick pan and tossing the salad takes the same amount of time as waiting for your take-away dinner.

Veggie lasagna
<https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/27/vegie-lasagne>

Red beef curry
<https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/51/red-beef-curry>

Mexican mince
<https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/476/mexican-mince--burrito-style>

Warm lemon chicken salad
<https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/259/warm-lemon-chicken-salad>

I'm out for dinner and there's so much junk on the menu.

Similar scenario: kids menu is nuggets, fried fish or pizza with chips



- Have a salad or a broth based soup to start with.
- Be an assertive customer by asking for changes to the menu. The kitchen should be able to modify their menu items for you:
 - Instead of fried battered fish, ask for it to be grilled.
 - Ask for smaller portion of the meat and larger portion of the salad.
 - See if they do half-serves or entrée sizes of the main meals.
- If it comes with a side of chips, swap it for a side salad, baked potato or cooked vegies.
- Little things like a salad drowned in oily dressing, butter on baked potato, or steak with a lot of creamy sauce can add extra kilojoules unnecessarily. Ask for sauce/dressing on the side so you get to choose how much you eat.
- In many food outlets, the kids menus lack variety and don't encourage healthy eating options. Request to not be given the kids menu. Let kids choose from the adults menu and share a meal.
- Ask for grilled chicken or fish instead of the crumbed and fried menu items. Food outlets respond to customer demand. If they get asked for healthier options often enough, then the menu could change to reflect this.

Teens out with friends.



- Choose take-away options with vegetables and salads such as lean meat and salad wraps and sushi. Opt out of creamy dressings and deep-fried vegetables.
- Save your money and don't upsize your meals.
- Share your meal with a friend.

I was really good today and didn't eat too much. So I can reward myself with some ice cream and chocolate after dinner.

- Consider your how much you eat during the day. Healthy options frequently throughout the day can reduce the energy binge in the evenings.
- If you have a sweet craving, try baked/cooked fruit desserts. The fibre in the fruit will also keep you filling full without so much sugar and kilojoules!
- Have you tried a 'fruit pizza'? Watermelon base, topped with other fresh fruit. It looks so colourful – and we do eat with our eyes!

Cinnamon apples

<https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/484/cinnamon-apples>

Fruit pizza



Snack attack

3pm slump at work – chocolate bar from the vending machine.



- Keep a box of crackers, bag of unsalted nuts, dried fruit or trail mix in your work desk for an afternoon snack.
- Opt for a fruit bowl to replace the biscuit tin or vending machine at work. Make it your 'Crunch&Sip' time at work!
- Have a glass of water or cup of tea and see if you are still hungry.
- Plan ahead and bring healthier homemade alternatives to the chocolate bar.

Date and muesli slice
<https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/133/date-and-muesli-slice>

Bought an ice cream at the petrol station.

- Go straight to the till and decline all 'special offers'!
- If you're genuinely hungry, check the chiller section for tubs of yoghurt, cheese and cracker packs, sushi, trail mix and fresh fruit.
- If it is less than an hour until your next meal, practice the three Ds: delay, deep breath and drink water!
- When fueling up, more often than not there will be a 'discount deal' offering 'cents off per litre' if you purchase chocolates, confectionery or soft drink. Don't fuel your body where you fuel your car.

Visiting the farmers market/community market/fetes.

- Don't be fooled into buying the 'raw' treats thinking they are healthy. These sweet treats are similar to eating other cakes and slices. Choose some delicious fresh fruit – the original 'raw' treat!

Looking for food and choose a quick snack.



Similar:

Comfort food snacking.

Studying hard, need some energy – reach for the chocolate.

- Ask yourself: “Am I hungry or thirsty?”. Sometimes you are actually thirsty between meals and it can be a habit to choose food over water.
- Eating when you're bored is not satisfying. Keep busy, go for a walk.
- Put unsalted nuts into small sachets and nibble slowly.

The kids are hungry – what’s in the fridge?

- Keep a tub of cut up vegetables and dip, or fruit in the fridge for access whenever they are hungry. Despite the whining and grumbles, don’t give in and grab them a junk snack.
- If it is less than an hour until your next meal, practice the three Ds: delay, deep breath and drink water!

Feeling peckish and looking for a late night snack.



- Brushing your teeth after dinner can make late night eating less appealing.

Social settings

<p>Office birthday celebration with cake.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring in some seasonal fruit to go with it. • Bake some healthy homemade goodies to share around. 	<p>Melon platter https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/88/melon-platter</p>
<p>Medium popcorn and cola at the movies.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a healthy meal before you go to the movies so you aren't hungry for a snack. • Bring your own homemade popcorn in a snaplock bag, plus a bottle of water. • Choose small sizes and/or share with others. 	<p>Easy popcorn https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/512/easy-popcorn</p>
<p>Half a bowl of chips, biscuits and dip at a BBQ.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit and veg platters are quick and simple to prepare – and always a winner! • Add a homemade dip to the vegie platter and stick to snacking on that. • Bring salads to BBQ, wait for main meal rather than filling up on snacks. 	<p>Guacamole https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/91/guacamole</p> <p>Tzatziki https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/90/tzatziki</p> <p>Coleslaw https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/217/coleslaw</p> <p>Rainbow pasta salad https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/255/rainbow-pasta-salad</p>

<p>Friday afternoon office drinks and nibbles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring a healthy platter. 	
<p>Girl's night out – churros and chocolate dipping sauce after dinner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest you go out dancing after dinner instead of having dessert. Not all social occasions need to revolve around food! • Go for a walk around after dinner to walk it off. 	
<p>At the footy – box of hot chips and a beer.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring your own food and drinks: sushi, fresh spring rolls, frittata, pasta or your homemade soup in a thermos. • Choose a grilled chicken burger or steak sandwich with salad instead of deep-fried foods. 	<p>Prawn and avocado roll https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/250/prawn-and-avocado-rice-paper-rolls</p> <p>Pumpkin, leek and feta mini frittata https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/371/pumpkin--leek-and-feta-mini-frittata</p> <p>Tomato soup https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/464/tomato-soup</p> <p>Spaghetti bolognaise https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/347/spaghetti-bolognaise</p>
<p>Gift giving: not necessarily a special occasion gift. It could be heading over to someone's house and wanting to take something.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of chocolates, lollies or wine, give flowers, nice tea or coffee, or even some fruit. • Ask if you can contribute a dish to the occasion, and make it a healthy contribution that you like to eat. 	

<p>Junk food fundraiser</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try the other varieties of non-junk food successful fundraisers: seeds/plants, voucher books, calendars, tea towels, trays of 'exotic' fruit eg mangoes, stonefruit. • Fruit and vegetable drives: fresh fruit and vegetable boxes from your local grocery store /supermarket or local fruit and veg shop. • Add an element of fun and activity to it: Walk-a-thon, Jump-rope-a-thon, Run-a-thon, Hula-hoop-a-thon, Dance-a-thon, Bike-a-thon, teacher vs student competitions or 30-day fitness challenges. 	<p>Other ideas: https://healthy-kids.com.au/teachers/healthy-school-fundraising/</p>
<p>Sports drink after sport in the evening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports drinks are only better than water (from a hydration point of view) if you've been exercising hard for more than 90 minutes. Go for water instead! • Want something other than plain water? Try fruit-infused flavoured still or sparkling water. 	<p>Sliced citrus water https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/507/sliced-citrus-water</p> <p>Strawberry and mint sparkling water https://livelighter.com.au/Recipe/506/strawberry-and-mint-sparkling-water</p>
<p>Post-sport game snack reward</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are trying to replenish and rehydrate your child or yourself after a game, you want to avoid foods that are filled with sugar, fat and salt. Fill them with goodness instead. • Fueling up after a game is a great place to teach about foods that are healthy. Next time you have snack duty, skip the doughnuts and sports drinks aisle — their little bodies will thank you! • Avoid the drive-through takeaways. It's nice to be the 'fun' parent, but the kids will appreciate you more for not taking them through the fast food drive-thru in the long run. Instead, schedule in a time to get in the kitchen with your kids and make healthy alternatives to these unhealthy takeaway foods. 	

<p>At an indoor children play centre – sitting down after ordering coffee and hot chips at the kiosk.</p> <p><i>Similar: attending children’s birthday party at the indoor play centre and forgot snacks. Now have to order at the kiosk and no healthy options available.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pack extra water bottles and food not only for the family but one for yourself. Don’t rely on a coffee and eating hot chips to pass the time. Walk around the children’s indoor play centre a few times to avoid prolonged sitting. • Ask kiosk for a sandwich with salad and multigrain or wholemeal bread. 	
<p>Feeling full because I have eaten too much!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For some people, a full plate sends the signal that you’re eating a full meal and a partially full plate looks like a half a meal, regardless of the actual quantity of food. An easy fix is to use a smaller plate! • Take your time eating – slow down, chew each bite and enjoy your food. You may be pleasantly surprised that you fill up faster with less food (and therefore fewer kilojoules). • Don’t have seconds. Wait 10 minutes to see if you are really hungry enough to eat more food. • Make meals a sociable occasion. Talking with friends and family can slow down your eating pace – this gives your body time to relay the ‘I’m full’ message to your brain. 	