Reduce the 2 PM Slump: Add Carbs to Lunch

Do you find yourself skipping lunch throughout the week? Are you struggling to stay awake during your afternoon classes? Do you wish you had more energy for your workouts? Eating more carbohydrates at lunch might be the answer! Carbohydrates have received a lot of bad rap over the years, but they’re not as bad as they are portrayed. When eaten, carbohydrates form the number one source of your body’s energy, glucose. Carbohydrates are converted within our cells to glucose which is then stored as glycogen. Glucose is the brain’s main source of fuel for the day, so when that lethargy hits, you may be lacking in a balanced meal. Choosing the types of carbohydrates that you pack into your day is key. Simple carbohydrates are found in refined grains such as white rice and bread, candies, cookies, cakes, and sugary sweetened beverages. This source of energy is metabolized by the body quicker than complex carbohydrates and have been stripped of fiber and nutrients, which can cause that afternoon crash. Complex carbohydrates provide a longer lasting source of energy that isn’t broken down as quickly and serves as a stronger source of fiber and nutrients. These positive lunch choices include whole grain tortillas, brown rice, and whole grain bread. When building a healthy lunch, MyPlate suggests making half of your meal fruits and veggies, choosing whole grain complex carbohydrates over refined grains, making lean protein your go-to choice, and including a low-fat dairy choice. Here are some tips for building a balanced lunch.

1. Choose lean proteins such as chicken, turkey, tofu, beans, or nuts. A serving size of meat is about the size of a deck of cards.
2. Choose whole grains such as whole grain bread, whole wheat pasta, oatmeal, and brown rice. Look at the nutrition label to make sure your whole grain has 3 grams of fiber or more per serving. A serving size of whole grains is about the size of your fist or half a baseball.
3. Choose fruits such as apples, bananas, peaches, berries, and whatever is in season. Eating the skin will increase the fiber you are eating which helps with blood sugar control. A ½ cup of fresh fruit is about the size of a half of a baseball.
4. Choose vegetables that are rich in vitamins and minerals such as spinach, kale, broccoli, green beans, carrots, or bell peppers. Looking for new ways to try and incorporate vegetables? Try adding them to your sandwich or wrap or building a salad. A stir fry is also a great way to incorporate vegetables!
5. Choose low-fat dairy options such as low-fat milk, low-fat yogurt, and low-fat cheese. A serving of cheese is about the size of four stacked dice.

A balanced meal consists of 2 servings of vegetables, 1 serving of fruit, 2 servings of whole grain carbohydrates, 1 serving of protein, and 1 serving of dairy. Put all these components together to make a meal that will help you stay awake for your afternoon classes and fuel your workout!

https://choosemyplate-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/printablematerials/DGTipsheet7BuildaHealthyMeal_0.pdf