

**Health and Wellness:**  
**Lunch Time**

**By Laura Jimenez, M.S.W.**

Whether you pack and bring lunch or buy it at school or work, the same health concerns apply. To stay as healthy as possible, here is a brief summary of:

**Foods to Avoid and Why:**

- 1) hotdogs, most if not all sandwich meats including bologna, ham, pastrami, corned beef, salami as well as bacon and pepperoni because while the nitrates contained within these foods kill potentially harmful toxic bacteria which help to preserve meat, they can also be converted by the stomach into carcinogens, or cancer causing agents, called nitrosamines and also cause other health problems for the brain, pancreas and other organs;
- 2) all of the following types of fish – tilefish, shark, swordfish, mackerel king, orange roughy, marlin, grouper, several weekly servings of canned, fresh or frozen tuna, because of high mercury levels which can cause numbness, hearing loss, visual problems, difficulty walking and severe emotional and cognitive difficulties; and
- 3) any foods or snacks which contain high sodium because excess sodium can cause or exacerbate high blood pressure which increases one's risk of heart disease, stroke and kidney failure.

**Safe Food Alternatives:**

- a) cook and cut up your favorite proteins for your sandwiches to avoid store bought processing (e.g., homemade chicken or turkey meat);
- b) if tuna is going to be consumed several times a week, use low-mercury canned tuna fish or canned light tuna available in some grocery stores (e.g., Whole Foods);
- c) use pasta with your favorite sauce – pesto and other sauces travel very well; and
- d) pack a salad at home and include homemade cooked beans for a safe and healthy protein.

Here are links to continue reading more on this topic:

- I. <http://news.consumerreports.org/health/2009/09/nitrates-in-sandwich-meat-nitrate-concerns-health-risks-and-nitrates.html>
- II. <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2011/01/22/if-you-eat-processed-meats-youre-risking-your-life.aspx>
- III. [http://www.hyscience.com/archives/2006/06/fight\\_cancer\\_av.php](http://www.hyscience.com/archives/2006/06/fight_cancer_av.php)
- IV. <http://archive.supermarketguru.com/page.cfm/14224>
- V. <http://www.fda.gov/food/foodsafety/product-specificinformation/seafood/foodborne pathogenscontaminants/methylmercury/ucm115644.htm>
- VI. <http://www.livestrong.com/article/238019-high-sodium-foods-to-avoid/>

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