

SCHOOL LUNCH SURVIVAL GUIDE

How to eat right when the cafeteria is working against you

THE SITUATION

You're surrounded by pizza, chips, chocolate milk, and mystery meat. The healthy options are sad and overpriced. Your friends are eating garbage. This is the reality of school lunch for most teenagers.

Here's the truth: you can navigate this. It requires zero willpower and one simple framework.

THE FRAMEWORK: PROTEIN FIRST

Before you pick up a tray, ask one question: WHERE IS THE PROTEIN?

Protein builds muscle, keeps you full, and doesn't spike your blood sugar. Find the protein first. Build the rest of the meal around it.

Protein sources in most cafeterias:

- Burger patties (eat without the bun)
- Grilled chicken (not fried)
- Eggs (if available at breakfast)
- Full-fat milk
- Cheese
- Beans (not ideal alone, but better than nothing)

THE HIERARCHY

TIER 1	EAT FREELY	Any protein, any non-fried vegetable, water
TIER 2	LIMIT	Beans, whole fruit, sweet potato (around workouts only)
TIER 3	MINIMIZE	Fried food, pizza, pasta, juice, flavored milk
TIER 4	AVOID	Soda, candy, chips, anything with unidentifiable sauce

THE MOVES

The Burger Hack: Take the burger. Remove the bun. Eat the patty with whatever vegetables are available. You just turned junk food into a solid protein source.

The Salad Build: Load up on protein (chicken, eggs, cheese) and vegetables. Use olive oil and vinegar -- not bottled dressing (seed oils and sugar).

The Tray Audit: Before you eat, look at your tray. Is there protein? Is there a vegetable? If yes to both, you're doing fine.

The Drink Rule: Water. Always. Chocolate milk has 30g sugar. Sports drinks have 34g. Soda has 65g. Water is free.

PREP PROTOCOL -- 5-MINUTE OPTIONS

- Hard-boiled eggs (make a batch Sunday night)
- Beef jerky (check label: no sugar, no seed oils)
- Nuts and seeds (almonds, walnuts, pumpkin seeds -- no seed oil coating)
- Cheese sticks or string cheese
- Nut butter packets (almond or peanut, no added sugar)

- Olives (individual packs)
- Cucumber or celery slices

THE SUNDAY PREP

Cook ground beef and roasted vegetables on Sunday. Portion into containers. You have lunch for 3-4 days. No bread, no rice, no pasta needed. Protein plus vegetables is a complete meal. This is what serious athletes do.

THE MINDSET

You don't have to be perfect. You don't have to explain your food choices to anyone. Just make the best choice available to you in each situation. Over time, those choices compound into results.

One bad meal is not a problem. A pattern of bad meals is.

