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Your Guide to Eating Out

Whether it's a business meeting over lunch, dinner from a neighborhood carry out, or a fast-food meal with the kids, eating out is a part of our lives. We eat out because it's easy, it's quick, and it's fun. But is it healthy?

It can be. Plan ahead, choose wisely, and you'll find foods that fit into your meal plan. Many restaurants are trying to meet diners' health needs. More and more people want healthy food choices. Some are watching calories. Others want to keep their cholesterol under control or eat less fat.

Some restaurants offer foods lower in cholesterol, fat, and sodium, and higher in fiber. All restaurants offer low calorie sweeteners in the blue, yellow or pink packets, and diet drinks. Many offer reduced-calorie

salad dressings, low-fat or fat-free milk, and salt substitutes. It's easy to find salads, fish, vegetables, baked or broiled food, and whole-grain breads.

Many restaurants have menu items that are "heart healthy." Ask for calorie and fat information on menu items. If you ask, chefs will often make low-fat entrees using low-cholesterol eggs or lean cuts of meat. You can ask for: skinless chicken, no butter on a particular dish, broiled instead of fried, and your sauces to be served on the side. There are some restaurants that let you order smaller portions at lower prices.



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Table Tips

Pick a restaurant with a variety of choices to increase your chances of finding the foods you want. When you eat out, order only what you need and want.

Here's how to order.

- If you don't know what's in a dish or don't know the serving size, ask.
- Try to eat the same portion as you would at home. If the serving size is larger, share some with a dining partner, or put the extra food in a container to go.
- Eat slowly.
- Ask for fish or meat broiled with no extra butter.
- Order your baked potato plain, then top it with a teaspoon of margarine or low-calorie sour cream, and/or vegetables from the salad bar.
- If you are on a low-salt meal plan, ask that no salt be added to your food.
- Ask for sauces, gravy and salad dressings "on the side." Try dipping your fork tines

in the salad dressing, then spear a piece of lettuce. Or add a teaspoon of dressing at a time to your salad. You'll use less this way.

- Order foods that are not breaded or fried because they add fat. If the food comes breaded, peel off the outer coating.
- Read the menu creatively. Order a fruit cup for an appetizer or the breakfast melon for dessert. Instead of a dinner entree, combine a salad with a low-fat appetizer.
- Ask for substitutions. Instead of French fries, request a double order of a vegetable. If you can't get a substitute, just ask that the high-fat food be left off your plate.
- Ask for low-calorie items, such as salad dressings, even if they're not on the menu. Vinegar and a dash of oil or a squeeze of lemon are a better choice than high-fat dressings.
- Limit alcohol, which adds calories but no nutrition to your meal.

Some restaurants will better meet your special needs if you phone ahead. When you make the reservation, ask if your food can be prepared with vegetable oil, low-fat margarine, little salt, no extra sauce or butter, and broiled instead of fried. Or ask to see a copy of the menu in advance so that you know which items would work well with your meal plan.

If you like the healthy choices on a restaurant's menu, let the manager

Dining On Time

If you have diabetes and take diabetes medication

- If you take diabetes pills or insulin, it pays to think about when you'll eat as well as what you'll eat. You can avoid problems by planning ahead. If you're eating out with others, ask them to eat at your usual time.
- Make your plans so you won't be kept waiting for a table when you need to be eating.
- Have your reservations and be on time. Avoid the times when the restaurant is busiest so you won't have to wait.
- Ask whether "special" dishes will take extra time.
- If your lunch or dinner is going to be later than usual, eat a fruit or starch serving from that meal at your usual mealtime.
- If the dinner will be very late, you can eat your bedtime snack at your usual dinner time. Then, eat your full dinner at the later hour. You may need to adjust your insulin to do this.

know. If you want more low-calorie, low-cholesterol choices, say so. Restaurants, like any business, offer what their customers want. They only know what you want if you tell them.

The Fast-Food Challenge

Believe it or not, you can make healthy fast-food choices. How? Know exactly what you are ordering and plan ahead. Keep the ground rules of good nutrition in mind. Eat a variety of foods in moderate amounts, limit the amount of fat you eat, and watch the amount of salt in food.

What you order is the key. It's easy to eat an entire day's worth of fat, salt, and calories in just one fast-food meal. But it's also possible to make wise choices and eat a fairly healthy meal.

Here are some tips to help you choose well:

- Know that an average fast-food meal can run as high as 1000 calories or more
- Know the nutritional value of the foods you order. Although there are some good choices, many fast-food items are high in fat and calories
- If you're having fast-food for one meal, let your other meals that day contain healthier foods, like fruits and vegetables
- Think about how your food will be cooked. Chicken and fish can be good choices - but not if they are breaded and deep fried
- If breakfast is your fast-food meal, choose a plain bagel, toast, or English muffin. Other muffins may be loaded

with sugar and fat. Add fruit juice or low-fat or fat-free milk. Order cold cereal with fat-free milk, pancakes without butter, or plain scrambled eggs. Limit bacon and sausage because they are high in fat.

Your order, please?

The fast food we eat may stick around a lot longer than we'd like. It may linger in our bodies as excess blood fats and extra pounds.



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- Watch out for words like jumbo, giant, deluxe, biggie-sized or super-sized. Larger portions mean more calories. They also mean more fat, cholesterol and salt. Order a regular or junior-sized sandwich instead.
- Choose grilled or broiled sandwiches with meats such as lean roast beef, turkey or chicken breast, or lean ham. Order items plain, without toppings, rich sauces, or mayonnaise. Add flavor with mustard, and crunch with lettuce, tomato, and onion.

- Skip the croissant or biscuit. Eat your sandwich on a bun, bread or English muffin and save calories and fat.
- Stay away from double burgers or "super" hot dogs with cheese, chili, or sauces. Cheese carries an extra 100 calories per ounce, as well as added fat and sodium.
- Go for the salad bar, but watch out for high-fat toppings like dressings, bacon bits, cheeses, and croutons. Even too much low-calorie dressing can add up. Check the calories on the packet. Also limit salad bar items that are dressed with a lot of mayo, such as potato or macaroni salad. Fill your salad with things like carrots, peppers, onion, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, and etc.

Low Fat Food Choices

APPETIZERS

- Tomato juice, soup (not cream based), consommé
- Raw (not marinated) vegetables such as celery or radishes; skip the dip
- Fresh fruit
- Fresh, steamed seafood

EGGS

- Poached, boiled

SALADS

- Tossed vegetable, lettuce, sliced tomato, cucumber
- Cottage cheese (as part of meal plan)
- Salads with low-calorie dressing, lemon juice, or vinegar

BREADS

- Whole-grain rolls or crackers, biscuits, tortillas or breads

POTATOES AND SUBSTITUTES

- Baked, boiled, or steamed potatoes
- Plain rice or noodles

FATS

- Diet margarine, low-calorie salad dressing, low-fat sour cream or yogurt

VEGETABLES

- Raw, stewed, steamed, boiled

MEAT, POULTRY, FISH

- Roasted, baked, broiled, or grilled poultry, fish, or seafood
- Lean meats with fat trimmed
- Dishes with gravy or sauce on the side

DESSERTS

- Fresh fruit or fruit juice
- Fat-free or low-fat yogurt
- One scoop of ice cream

BEVERAGES

- Coffee, tea
- Low-fat milk
- Sugar-free soda

Your order, please? cont'd

- Order bean burritos, soft tacos, fajitas, and other non-fried items when eating Mexican fast foods. Choose chicken over beef. Limit refried beans. Or ask if they have beans that aren't refried. Pile on extra lettuce, tomatoes, and salsa. Go easy on cheese, sour cream, and guacamole. Watch out for deep-fried taco salad shells - a taco salad can have more than 1,000 calories!
- Pizza can be a good fast food choice. Go for thin crust pizza with vegetable toppings. Limit to 1-2 slices. Meat and extra cheese add calories, fat and sodium.
- End your meal with sugar-free, fat-free frozen yogurt or a small cone of fat-free yogurt. Better still, bring a piece of fresh fruit from home. Ices, sorbets, and sherbets have less fat and fewer calories than ice cream. But they are chock full of sugar. If you have diabetes, you'll need to work the extra carbohydrate into your meal plan.
- Be alert for traps. Fat-free muffins for breakfast may have plenty of sugar. Skinless fried chicken can have almost as much fat as the regular kind. Chinese food may seem like a healthy choice, but many dishes are deep fried or high in fat and sodium, especially in the sauces.