

Eat Well at Restaurants

Often when we eat at home, we can control what and how much we eat. All of that changes when faced with a restaurant meal. There are lots of challenges involved with trying to make healthy choices when dining out. Here are just a few:

- Large portions
- Limited healthy choices
- Not knowing ingredients or how food was made
- Tempting food
- Wanting to be polite
- Wanting to get your money's worth
- Drinking alcohol

Paying attention to the type of restaurant you go to can also help.

Find restaurants in your area that have some tasty and healthy options. Suggest one of them when planning meals out!

You are more likely to find healthy choices at:

- Places with a salad bar
- Sit-down restaurants
- Vegetarian restaurants

You are less likely to find healthy choices at:

- All-you-can-eat buffets
- Burger restaurants
- Most fast-food restaurants
- Pizza restaurants



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As well as paying attention to how your food is prepared, consider your menu choices. Remember how to build a healthy plate!

On menus, look for the words:

- Baked
- Broiled
- Grilled
- Healthy
- Light
- Low-fat or fat-free
- Steamed
- Whole grain or whole wheat

To find out if an item is healthy, ask:

- How is this made?
- What ingredients are in this?
- What kind of oil is this cooked in?

To make a healthy swap, ask:

- Can I have this baked/steamed/broiled/grilled instead of fried?
- Can I have extra veggies on my sandwich instead of cheese?
- Can I have the dressing/sauce/gravy/sour cream/butter on the side?
- Can I have a baked potato instead of fries?
- Can I have a salad instead of coleslaw?
- Can this be cooked in vegetable oil instead of lard/butter?
- Can I have some fruit instead of dessert?
- Can the fat be trimmed from the meat before it's cooked?
- Can the skin be removed from the chicken before it's cooked?
- Can I have skim milk with my coffee instead of half-and-half?
- Can I have water with lemon instead of soda?
- Can I get a side order of steamed vegetables instead of fries?

To make sure you get a healthy amount, ask:

- Can I get the smallest size of this item?
- Can I have an appetizer instead of a main course? (Bonus: add a side of veg)
- Can my friend and I share this item?
- Can I get a to-go box when you bring my meal? (Then you can box up half of it before you start eating!) You can always take leftovers home with you for another meal.



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Type of Restaurant	Choose More Often	Choose Less Often	Special Requests
Fast Food/ Fast Casual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grilled chicken sandwich • Lean roast beef sandwich • Single hamburger • Turkey sandwich • Salad • Chili, bean and broth soups • Low-calorie drinks, such as unsweetened iced tea or water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fried or crispy sandwiches • “Super-sized” burgers with high-fat toppings (cheese, mayonnaise, bacon) • Fries • Chips • Cream soups • Soft drinks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salad dressing on the side • Grilled, not fried • Extra vegetables on sandwich • Fruit on the side
Mexican	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft tacos, burritos • Chicken, vegetable, or shrimp fajitas • Beans • Salsa • Low-calorie drinks, such as unsweetened iced tea or water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep-fried items such as flautas, chimichangas, chalupas, taquitos • Chips and dip • Nachos • Sour cream, cheese • Margaritas, sangrias 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salsa or guacamole instead of cheese or sour cream • Brown rice, whole grain tortillas when available
Italian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grilled entrées, such as chicken, fish or sirloin steak • Pasta with tomato-based sauces, such as marinara • Vegetable pizza (easy on the cheese) • Minestrone soup • Salad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream-based sauces, such as Alfredo • Cheese-based entrées such as ravioli or lasagna • Pepperoni or sausage pizza • Fried eggplant or chicken parmesan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole-grain pasta when available • Less cheese on pizza • Olive oil instead of butter • Extra vegetables
Asian (Thai, Chinese, Japanese)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broth-based soup • Chicken or beef teriyaki • Steamed or stir-fried vegetables, chicken, beef, shrimp, or tofu • Edamame • Sushi • Steamed/baked fish • Steamed appetizers, such as fresh spring rolls, steamed dumplings • Steamed rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep-fried dishes, such as orange chicken, tempura, wontons, crab rangoon and egg rolls • Fried crispy noodles and fried rice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra vegetables • Cook in less oil • Steamed instead of fried • Brown rice instead of white when available