

Eating Out the Healthy Way

Do you want to eat healthier when you eat out? The problem is that most restaurant foods are higher in fat, salt, and sugar than homemade foods. A little planning will make a difference.

Limit the number of times you eat out each week. Use the tips in this handout to make healthier choices when you do eat out.

Ask questions

The server can usually tell you how the food is made and what ingredients are in the dish. Often you can ask for small changes to make your meal healthier.

Tips for eating out

Use these ideas to help you eat healthier the next time you eat out:

- Have a small snack before going out to eat so you aren't too hungry. This may help to stop you from overeating. Vegetables and fruit are a healthy snack.
- Plan your order before leaving home.
- Pick restaurants that offer healthy food items and provide nutrition information. Choose foods that are lower in fat, salt, and added sugars, and higher in fibre.
- Choose meals that include foods from at least three of the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives.
- Choose foods made with healthier cooking methods such as steaming, baking, barbequing, grilling, poaching, or broiling.
- Ask to replace high fat foods with healthier choices.
- Ask for a salad or steamed vegetables instead of fries.

- Limit foods that are breaded, fried, crispy, sautéed, creamed, or in sauces.
- Trim fat from meat and poultry.
- Choose higher fibre foods. Order a meal that includes vegetables, salad, fruit, whole grains, or beans.
- Don't add salt, margarine, or butter to your food at the table. Restaurant food is often already high in sodium (salt) and fat.
- Ask for sauces, gravies, and salad dressings on the side, and then add less to your food. Try dipping your fork in the salad dressing for each bite, rather than pouring it on your salad.
- Order smaller portions of foods if possible. The portions served in restaurants are often larger than you would eat at home.
- Ask for a half order, share an order with someone, or ask for half the meal to take home.
- Skip dessert or share it with the whole table.

At the buffet

- Look at all the items at the buffet before you make your choices.
 - Choose foods prepared without sauces, gravies, or dressings.
 - Choose foods that aren't deep fried.
 - Choose dishes that have vegetables and whole grains.
- Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit.
- Limit your trips to the buffet line.
- Use a smaller plate.
- Before you go for seconds, wait 20 minutes to see if you are still hungry.

	Choose these foods more often	Limit these foods as they are higher in fat, sugar, and salt
Breakfasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruit or fruit salad • Low fat yogurt • Whole grain foods like toast, English muffin, bagel, pancakes, low fat muffin • French toast made with whole grain bread • Whole grain cereal or oatmeal • Peanut butter • Poached or boiled eggs, or liquid egg white • Ham, turkey bacon, or back bacon, instead of bacon (Note: these are high in salt) • Non-hydrogenated margarine, light jam, or syrup • Milk or sweetener for coffee or tea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacon and sausages • Hash browns, grits, or fried potatoes • Fried eggs, omelets with cheese, eggs Benedict, or quiche • Breakfast sandwiches • Butter, regular cream cheese, syrup, or honey • Donuts, danishes, croissants, or pastries • Biscuits, scones, crepes, or muffins • Cream and sugar for coffee or tea
Lunches and Suppers	<p>Soups, salads, and appetizers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broth-based or vegetable soups or cream soups made with skim, 1%, or 2% milk (Note: these are high in salt) • Salads with low fat dressing on the side • Whole grain bread or rolls without butter or margarine • Steamed shellfish <p>Sandwiches or submarines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain bread, bagels, rolls, pitas, tortillas, and rye bread • Mustard, salsa, horseradish, or low fat mayonnaise • Tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, peppers, and onions • Tuna, salmon, lean deli meats such as chicken, turkey, or roast beef • Vegetarian burgers, beef burgers, or grilled chicken burgers, with no mayonnaise or special sauces <p>Entrees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meat, fish, and poultry that is poached, barbecued, baked, grilled, roasted, broiled, or stir fried • Steamed rice or baked potato without sour cream, bacon bits, butter, or cheese • “Au jus” or in its own juice • Pasta with tomato, vegetable, or marinara sauce • tofu; cooked, dried beans, peas, lentils 	<p>Soups, salads, and appetizers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream soup made with whole milk or cream • Chicken wings, potato skins, nachos • Ready made salads with full fat dressing <p>Sandwiches or submarines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breaded, battered, tempura, or deep fried foods like French fries, onion rings, zucchini sticks, battered mushrooms • Melts, or grilled sandwiches such as Monte Cristo, Denver, or Reuben • Croissant or club sandwiches, or hot sandwiches with gravy • Salad fillings like egg salad or tuna salad <p>Entrees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scalloped potatoes or fried rice • Pasta in cream sauce, like Alfredo sauce • Creamy curried dishes • Breaded/battered, fried, tempura, or sautéed meat, fish, or poultry • “Au gratin” or with cheese • Deep dish pizza • Burgers with cheese, bacon, and special sauces

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Desserts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit salad, fresh fruit • Compotes, poached fruit, or small servings of fruit crisp • Sorbet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheesecake • Desserts with cream or whipped cream • Pastries and cakes with icing or sauce • Regular or premium ice cream • Pies, tarts, or flans • Mousses or soufflés
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water, milk, fortified soy beverage • 100% pure juice (limit to ½ cup/125 mL a day) • hot or cold drinks with no added sugar or fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinks with added sugars: regular pop, fruit drinks, iced tea, hot or cold drinks sweetened with sugar, sport drinks, milkshakes, fruit smoothies that are higher in sugar or fat, slushes, alcohol. • Avoid refillable or “bottomless” drinks

Nutrition information websites

Many restaurants have nutrition information for their food on the Internet. To find nutrition information on the net, follow these steps:

1. Search for the restaurant that you want nutrition information for. Check to see if there is a Canadian site.
2. Look for nutrition information on the restaurant’s home page. Nutrition information may be listed under a name like Nutrition Guide, Menu, or Nutrition Calculator.
3. Look for the menu items you like to eat. Check the grams of fat, sugar, fibre, and milligrams of sodium in this food. See *Practice picking a healthy choice*, below.

Practice picking a healthy choice

When you have some nutrition information, use it to compare menu items. Choose menu items that are:

- **Lower** in fat, sugar, and sodium
- **Higher** in fibre

Circle the food that is the better fast food choice.

	6 chicken nuggets	1 small hamburger
Calories	310	250
Fat	21 g	8 g
Carbohydrate	20 g	32 g
Fibre	1 g	2 g
Sugar	0 g	7 g
Sodium	670 mg	510 mg

If you picked the hamburger, you’re right! The hamburger is lower in fat and sodium (salt), and higher in fibre.

Healthier international choices

Restaurant foods are higher in calories, fat, sugar, and salt, and lower in fibre. Use the suggestions below to make healthier choices.

	Choose these foods more often		
Chinese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable dishes (stir fries, chow mein, chop suey) • Steamed or boiled dishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wonton, hot and sour, or clear soups • Dumplings • Tofu dishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poached dishes • Roasted dishes • Barbecued dishes • Mushu pork or chicken
Japanese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teriyaki or sukiyaki dishes • Sushi and sashimi • Miso and clear soups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broiled dishes (yakimono) • Tofu dishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seafood and vegetables combo (yosenabe)
Middle Eastern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salad (horiatiki) with dressing on the side • Grilled vegetables • Grilled shish or manter kebabs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Souvlaki • Fish (plaki) • Hummus • Tzatziki 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole wheat pita bread • Couscous with vegetables and/or chicken • Bulgur dishes such as tabbouleh
Thai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice paper or fresh spring rolls (not deep fried) • Kabobs, satay • Pad thai, thai salads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stir fry vegetables, meat, or fish dishes • Tofu dishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Yum soups or other broth-based soup • Curry dishes (not creamy)
Mexican	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fajitas, quesadillas, enchiladas, soft tacos, with whole grain tortillas • Vegetable or bean burritos and tostados 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black beans • Grilled chicken dish with vegetables • Vegetable chili • Gazpacho 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salsa, pico de gallo • Low fat sour cream, low fat cheese • Small servings of guacamole
Indian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable-, lentil-, and bean-based stews and soups • Curries (not creamy) • Vegetable/vegetarian dishes • Yogurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roasted or grilled meat, fish, and poultry dishes • Fish or chicken prepared in masala, bhuna, vindaloo, tandoori, or tikka style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seekh kabab • Raita, chutneys • Baked samosas or kababs • Whole grain chapattis, naan (unbuttered)
Italian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veal, chicken, or fish (plain, not breaded) • Vegetable-based soups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tomato-based sauces • Whole grain pasta • Polenta 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetarian pizza • Thin crust pizza

Eating out is meant to be fun, so enjoy it! Try to make healthier choices most of the time. Making healthy food choices is not just about **what** you choose; it is also about **how much** you eat.