

Smart Dining Eating Healthy While Eating Out

Did you know that most of us eat our meals out today more than ever? It's quick and convenient, and there is an abundance of fast and inexpensive food available to us 24/7. It is also a fact that most restaurant foods are high in sodium, fat and calories. Fast food consumption has been associated with increased rates of obesity and related conditions in the United States, including hypertension and diabetes *

Although we do not have control on what the restaurant puts in our meals, we can control the choices we make and be better consumers by learning what these restaurants have to offer. Here are some tips for dining out:

- Split a large entree with another family member. You can even take ½ of your entrée home and save it for next day's lunch. You'll save dollars — and calories
- Fried, au gratin, crispy, escalloped, pan-fried, sautéed or stuffed foods are high in fat and calories. Instead, look for steamed, broiled, baked, grilled, poached or roasted foods. Instead of fried oysters, or fried fish or chicken, choose boiled spiced shrimp, or baked, boiled or grilled fish or chicken. If you're not sure about a certain dish, ask your server how it's prepared. You can request that visible fat be trimmed from meat and skin be removed from poultry before cooking. Avoid dishes with lots of cheese, sour cream and mayonnaise.
- High-sodium foods include those that are pickled, in cocktail sauce, smoked, in broth or au jus or in soy or teriyaki sauce. Limit these items. Ask that your food be prepared without added salt or MSG.
- Order gravy, sauces and dressings served on the side, so you can control the amount you eat or skip them completely. Salads make great meals, but be careful of the dressing.
- Cakes and ice creams usually have the most fat, sugar and calories. Split dessert with a family member, or order a frozen yogurt or fruit bowl. Even if they aren't on the dessert menu, many restaurants can offer you fruit or sherbet instead of high-fat pastries and ice creams.
- Many supermarkets and specialty stores offer prepared entrees to take home when you're in a rush; the same tips listed here for restaurants also apply to take-home foods.
- For breakfast, instead of biscuits and gravy, try a whole-wheat toast with peanut butter and jelly or whole grain bagel with low-fat cream cheese; you'll avoid the sodium, fat and calories and stay satisfied until lunch. Be sure to add a piece of fruit for vitamins.
- Try to avoid all-you-can-eat buffets because you're more likely to eat more than you need.

For more tips go to www.heart.org and enter "eating out" in the search box for more helpful tips ^

*Jeffery, R., French, S. (1998). Epidemic obesity in the United States: are fast foods and television contributing?. American Journal of Public Health

www.heart.org