

choosing healthy fast food

Fast food options can make it hard to manage diabetes.
Follow these tips for eating healthy at fast food restaurants.



Make careful menu selections and pay attention to the descriptions on the menu.

Dishes labeled deep-fried, pan-fried, baked, batter-dipped, breaded, creamy, crispy, scalloped, Alfredo, au gratin or in cream sauce are usually high in calories, unhealthy fats or sodium. Order items with more vegetables and choose leaner meats.

Drink water with your meal.

Soda is a huge source of hidden calories. One 32-oz Big Gulp with regular cola packs about 425 calories. Try adding a little lemon to your water or ordering unsweetened iced tea.



“Undress” your food.

When choosing items be aware of calorie- and fat-packed salad dressings, spreads, cheese, sour cream, etc. For example, ask for a grilled chicken sandwich without the mayonnaise. You can ask for a packet of ketchup or mustard to control the amount you put on your sandwich. Choose whole-grain bread when possible.



Don't be afraid to special order.

Ask for your vegetables and main dishes to be served without the sauces. Ask for olive oil and vinegar for your salads or order the dressing “on the side” and spoon only a small amount on at a time. If your food is fried or cooked in oil or butter, ask to have it broiled or steamed.

**Watch portion size.**

An average fast food meal can run as high as 1,000 calories or more, so choose a smaller portion size, order a side salad instead of fries, and don't super-size anything. At a typical restaurant, a single serving provides enough for two meals. Always start with the intention to take half home. Sharing also might make dessert more of an option.

Watch your salt.

Fast food restaurant food tends to be very high in sodium, a major contributor to high blood pressure. Do not add any more salt to fast food.

**Avoid buffets – even seemingly healthy ones like salad bars.**

You'll likely overeat at a buffet to get your money's worth. If you do choose buffet dining, opt for fresh fruits, salads with olive oil & vinegar or low-fat dressings, broiled entrees and steamed vegetables. Resist the temptation to go for seconds, or wait at least 20 minutes after eating to make sure you're really still hungry before going back for more.

**Eat mindfully.**

Pay attention to what you eat and savor each bite. Chew your food more thoroughly and avoid eating on the run. Being mindful also means stopping before you are full. It takes time for our bodies to register that we have eaten. Mindful eating relaxes you, so you digest better, and makes you feel more satisfied.

Remember the big picture.

Think of eating out in the context of your whole diet. If it is a special occasion, or you know you want to order your favorite meal at a nice restaurant, make sure your earlier meals that day are extra healthy. Moderation is always key, but planning ahead can help you relax and enjoy your dining out experience while maintaining good nutrition and diet control.

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