

Fast Food Options: Tips for Making Healthy Choices



Eating out at a fast food restaurant can be a once-in-a-while treat, but menu items are often high in calories, fat and salt and lower in vegetables and fruit. Luckily, many “fast food” restaurants are making it a little easier with some healthier menu options. These tips will help you choose wisely!

Downsize it

Super-sized portions of fast food usually cost only a little extra, but can pack a whopping nutritional blow.

Research shows the larger the serving in front of us, the more food we tend to eat. **Keep in mind:** double the portion = double the calories.

Compare the Calories and Fat	Total Calories	Fat (grams)
Double patty hamburger with dressing or mayonnaise + large fries + large soft drink	1570	66
Double patty hamburger + large fries + large soft drink	1200	40
Single patty hamburger + small fries + small soft drink	620	18
Single patty hamburger + side salad* + 2 % milk	435	16

* With low fat dressing

Tip: If you just can't bear to pass on a meal deal, split the large portion with someone else.

Watch the “extras”

Those little “extras” like salad dressings, sandwich sauces, mayo, spreads and gravy can add a lot of fat, calories and salt to your meal. **Choose:**

- Veggies as a tasty garnish for sandwiches
- Lower-fat condiments such as ketchup, salsa, mustards and relish – but use sparingly since these condiments are also high in sodium.
- Lower-fat salad dressings.

Ask for “extras” on the side so you can use small amounts.

Design it yourself

Keep the calories, sodium and fat in check and boost fibre with made-to-order options. When you order a sandwich, burger, wrap, salad or pizza, ask for:

- Whole grain breads, buns, wraps and pizza crusts

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- Plenty of colourful vegetables and fruit
- Leaner fresh cooked meats such as roast beef, chicken or turkey breast. Skip processed deli meats such as salami and balogna
- Lower-fat milk products
- Lower-fat sauces, spreads and salad dressings

Be balanced

Healthy eating is a matter of balancing your food choices over time. So if you overindulge at one meal, make healthier choices at your next meals.

Tip: Order the child-size menu items so you get the taste you want without big portions.

Salad savvy

Salads can be a healthy choice, but not all salads are created equal. For example, a chicken Caesar salad with dressing can have about as many calories and as much fat as a deep fried chicken sandwich.

Ask for dressing on the side and use small amounts. Choose leafy green salads and skip the croutons, bacon bits and fried noodles or tortillas; they offer extra fat, calories and sodium but few good-for-you nutrients.

Drink smart

Water is the best choice to quench your thirst; choose water or milk with your meal when eating out. Some sugary drinks contain as many calories as a whole meal. In fact, milkshakes often contain more calories and sugar than any other menu item. If you choose a sugary drink, order the smallest size. Less is best.

Tip: Add milk to tea and coffee instead of cream to save calories and fat. Flavoured syrups and whipped cream may add as much as 200 to 300 calories or more.

Breakfast basics

Make wise breakfast choices to give you the energy and nutrients you need for a great start to your day. Choose healthier options such as oatmeal, fruit and yogurt cups or whole grain bagels with peanut butter.

Tip: Limit higher fat options like doughnuts, pastries, muffins, croissants, bacon, sausages and fried hash browns.

Fill up on fibre

Choose menu items made with whole grain breads, lots of vegetables or fruit, and legumes (dried beans, lentils and peas). Try chili, salads, vegetarian burgers or falafel.

Desserts

Think fresh and light when it comes to dessert. Fresh fruit, plain frozen yogurts and sorbet are healthier options. Be portion wise, some large cookies may add as much as 400 or more calories. Love the sweet stuff? Order one dessert and ask for many spoons to share with friends or family.

Get the facts

Ask for nutrition facts at the restaurant before you order. Compare the calories, fat, sodium, sugar, fibre and key nutrients – you may be surprised!

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