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Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from the American Dietetic Association

Healthy Eating on the Run: A Month of Tips

You probably eat out a lot—most Americans do. People are looking for fast, easy and good-tasting foods to fit a busy lifestyle. Whether it's carry-out, food court, office cafeteria or sit-down restaurant, there are smart choices everywhere. Here are 30 tips to help you eat healthy when eating out.

1. Think ahead and plan where you will eat. Consider what meal options are available. Look for restaurants or carry-out with a wide range of menu items.
2. Take time to look over the menu and make careful selections. Some restaurant menus may have a special section for "healthier" choices.
3. Read restaurant menus carefully for clues to fat and calorie content. Menu terms that can mean less fat and calories: baked, braised, broiled, grilled, poached, roasted, steamed.
4. Menu terms that can mean more fat and calories: batter-fried, pan-fried, buttered, creamed, crispy, breaded. Choose these foods only occasionally and in small portions.
5. Order the regular or child-size portion. Mega-sized servings are probably more than you need. For a lighter meal, order an appetizer in place of a main course.
6. It's OK to make special requests, just keep them simple. For example, ask for a baked potato or side salad in place of French fries; no mayonnaise or bacon on your sandwich; sauces served on the side.
7. Hunger can drive you to eat too much bread before your meal arrives. Hold the bread or chips until your meal is served. Out of sight, out of mind.
8. Think about your food choices for the entire day. If you're planning a special restaurant meal in the evening, have a light breakfast and lunch.
9. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. No more than one drink for women and two for men. Alcohol tends to increase your appetite and provides calories without any nutrients.
10. Tempted by sweet, creamy desserts? Order one dessert with enough forks for everyone at the table to have a bite.
11. Split your order. Share an extra large sandwich or main course with a friend or take half home for another meal.
12. Boost the nutrition in all types of sandwiches by adding tomato, lettuce, peppers or other vegetables.

13. A baked potato offers more fiber, fewer calories and less fat than fries if you skip the sour cream and butter. Top your potato with broccoli and a sprinkle of cheese or salsa.
14. At the sandwich shop, choose lean beef, ham, turkey or chicken on whole grain bread. Ask for mustard, ketchup, salsa or lowfat spreads. And, don't forget the veggies.
15. In place of fries or chips, choose a sidesalad, fruit or baked potato. Or, share a regular order of fries with a friend.
16. Enjoy ethnic foods such as Chinese stirfry, vegetable-stuffed pita or Mexican fajitas. Go easy on the sour cream, cheese and guacamole.
17. At the salad bar, pile on the dark leafy greens, carrots, peppers and other fresh vegetables. Lighten up on mayonnaise-based salads and high-fat toppings. Enjoy fresh fruit as your dessert.
18. Eat your lower-calorie food first. Soup or salad is a good choice. Follow up with a light main course.
19. Ask for sauces, dressings and toppings to be served "on the side." Then you control how much you eat.
20. Pass up all-you-can-eat specials, buffets and unlimited salad bars if you tend to eat too much.
21. If you do choose the buffet, fill up on salads and vegetables first. Take no more than two trips and use the small plate that holds less food.
22. Load up your pizza with vegetable toppings. If you add meat, make it lean ham, Canadian bacon, chicken or shrimp.
23. Look for a sandwich wrap in a soft tortilla. Fillings such as rice mixed with seafood, chicken, or grilled vegetables are usually lower in fat and calories.
24. Build a better breakfast sandwich: replace bacon or sausage with Canadian bacon or ham and order your sandwich on a whole grain English muffin or bagel.
25. Be size-wise about muffins, bagels, croissants and biscuits. A jumbo muffin has more than twice the fat and calories of the regular size.
26. Try a smoothie made with juice, fruit and yogurt for a light lunch or snack.
27. Refrigerate carry-out or leftovers if the food won't be eaten right away. Toss foods kept at room temperature for more than two hours.
28. Grabbing dinner at the supermarket deli? Select rotisserie chicken, salad-in-a-bag and freshly baked bread. Or, try sliced lean roast beef, onion rolls, potato salad and fresh fruit.
29. Always eating on the go? Tuck portable, nonperishable foods in your purse, tote, briefcase or backpack for an on-the-run meal. Some suggestions are peanut butter and crackers, granola bars, a piece of fresh fruit, trail mix, single serve packages of whole grain cereal or crackers.
30. For desk-top dining, keep single-serve packages of crackers, fruit, peanut butter, soup, or tuna in your desk for a quick lunch.

For a referral to a registered dietitian and for additional food and nutrition information visit www.eatright.org.

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The American Dietetic Association is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

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