

TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING AT RESTAURANTS

Make careful menu selections – 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, so one Big Gulp can quickly gulp up a big portion of your daily calorie intake. 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 and add it yourself, controlling how much you put on your sandwich

Don't be afraid to special order - Many menu items would be healthy if it weren't for the way they were prepared. 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 1000 calories or more, so choose a smaller portion size, order a side salad instead of fries, and don't supersize anything. At a typical restaurant, a single serving provides enough for two meals. Take half home or divide the portion with a dining partner. Sharing might make dessert (or something else indulgent) more of an option.

Watch your salt - Restaurant food tends to be very high in sodium, a major contributor to high blood pressure. Don't add insult to injury by adding more salt.

Avoid buffets – even seemingly healthy ones like salad bars. You'll likely overeat 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.

Check for online guides - Go to websites that provide health and nutrition information. Some even publish comparison downloadable guides or inexpensive pocket guides. Learn how to make a healthier meal selection at your favorite restaurant. www.healthydiningfinder.com allows you to search for restaurants offering a selection of healthier menu options and view the nutrition data for selected items. You can search for area restaurants or a specific restaurant.