

EATING WELL EVEN AT FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS

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Fast food restaurants – they seem to be everywhere, and are easy and inexpensive for the busy life you lead. Believe it or not, you don't have to give them up. You can just make some adjustments to what you order.

"Do you have any nutrition menus? All right, thank you."

Just like traditional restaurants, many fast food restaurants have tools to help you make better choices. Ask your server for a nutrition information guide, to help ensure you are making a healthy food choice. Some restaurants may have it posted on the wall by the counter, or check out their website before you visit.

These guides show you the number of calories, total carbohydrate, fiber, and total fat – including saturated fats and trans fats – in each of the products they serve. Use this to choose a meal lower in calories, carbohydrate and fat. But also take a look at the fine print. Some of the nutritional values listed are for items without cheese or condiments.

If you can, take the nutrition guide with you and make a plan for the next time you order.

"Can I help you sir?"

"I'd like a chicken sandwich with no mayonnaise and, a side salad please."

"Low-fat?"

"Yes, low-fat."

Know what you want before you get to the counter or drive-through window. If you feel pressured to order quickly, you may go back to your old habits.

Add a little bit of mustard and ketchup, instead of high-fat condiments like 'secret sauce' or mayonnaise or dressings. And dip into your condiments to limit them even more.

"Would you like to super size your meal?"

You may be tempted to answer, 'Yes.' It may sound like a good deal money-wise, but bigger is not always better.

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"No, thank you."

"Okay, sir."

Stick with the small size; you'll get the same taste but a lot less calories, fat and sodium and still pay less.

"Hi, can I have a chicken sandwich with a baked potato? Put everything on the side, and I'll also do a light lemonade, please."

Choose to get creative with combos. If you really want a higher-fat cheeseburger, then why not choose something a little healthier on the side? Instead of french fries, try a small salad, or a baked potato.

"If you get a baked potato, most of the time they come huge, they get those really big baked potatoes. But if I had the urge, or wanted one, I would cut it in half once they brought it in, and everything else would be on the side, the butter and the sour cream. And if I had a taste for it I would just dab it on a little bit."

If chicken is what you like, choose grilled chicken as a healthy substitute for deep-fried chicken items. Try a reduced-fat taco at the Mexican fast food restaurant.

Or, hold the sour cream and cheese. Instead, you could order a little guacamole on the side; that has the good kind of fat in it. But watch your portion size – it's also high in calories.

"Hi, may I take your order?"

Watch while Ann and Scott order at a fast food restaurant.

"Can I get a cheeseburger, large fry, and a large coke? It's for here."

"And can I get a hamburger Happy Meal, please? With a diet drink."

Now let's take a look at the nutritional values of each meal. Scott's cheeseburger, large fries and regular soda amount to 1,200 calories, while Ann's kid's meal is 500 calories. Can you see the difference? Which meal would you choose?

Today, even fast food restaurants are trying to provide you with healthy options. Use the nutritional food guide to plan your order. Skip the high-fat condiments. Don't mega-size that meal. Get creative with your combos. Soon, even easy and convenient can mean healthy for you.