

The Fast Food Report Card



Fast foods are typically high in fat, calories and sodium. Eating too much fat, especially saturated and trans fat, can raise your blood cholesterol levels and put you at a higher risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some types of cancer. Excess calories can lead to weight gain. And, in some people, a high sodium intake is associated with high blood pressure.

Fast foods also tend to be low in fibre and important nutrients such as vitamins A, C, D and folic acid. If you eat out often, keep your choices as simple and basic as possible. Most fast food restaurants now offer a selection of healthier, lower-fat choices and post this nutrition information on their web sites. Some restaurants indicate the lighter and lower-fat options directly on their menus.

How Does a Typical Fast Food Meal Add Up?

Consider that the average adult needs about 2000 calories, no more than 65 g of fat and no more than 2400 mg of sodium each day. Look for the choices with less calories, fat and sodium.

Small hamburger, side green salad with light Italian dressing, 1% milk
370 calories, 15 g fat, 930 mg sodium

Deluxe burger, large fries and small chocolate shake
1700 calories, 70 g fat, 2300 mg sodium

Grilled chicken sandwich and orange juice
375 calories, 5.5 g fat, 1345 mg sodium

Deep fried chicken sandwich and cream of broccoli soup
550 calories, 17 g fat, 2000 mg sodium

Watch the Portion Size

Over the years, portion sizes have become bigger and bigger. At fast food counters, beware of super-sized items and combination meals that offer more food than what you would normally eat. These meals might be light on your wallet, but they're heavy on the fat, calories and sodium.

At restaurants, don't feel obligated to clean your plate. Order an appetizer as your entrée or take the leftovers home. If you dine at a buffet, take a small sample of different foods instead of overeating.



Look for Clues to Healthy Eating

When you see the words...	It means the food is probably...
Baked, barbecued, broiled, charbroiled, grilled, poached, roasted, steamed, stir-fried	Cooked with little or no added fat
Alfredo, au gratin or in a cheese sauce, battered, breaded, buttered, creamed, crispy, deep-fried, en croûte, fried, hollandaise, pan-fried, pastry, prime, rich, sautéed, scalloped, with gravy, with mayonnaise, with thick sauce	Higher in fat and calories
Pickled, smoked, soy sauce	Higher in sodium

Balance Out the Meal

Meals eaten away from home tend to be low in vegetables, fruit and milk products. Try these tips to help round out the meal.



- Think about your food choices for the entire day. If you know that you'll be eating a meal out, then plan to eat plenty of whole grains, vegetables, fruit and lower-fat milk products throughout the rest of the day.
- Start off with a mixed green salad in a balsamic vinaigrette. Or head to the salad counter and fill your plate with veggie sticks and fresh fruit. Keep the salad dressing and dip on the side.
- Load up your sandwich with veggie toppings like lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions and peppers.
- Choose lower-fat milk or fruit juice instead of pop. Whether they are the "diet" or regular versions, soft drinks offer no nutrition. Plus, think of how quickly the empty calories can add up in pop, especially in the super-sized cups.

- Order a side dish of vegetables if they're not included with the main entrée.
- Opt for frozen yogurt or ice milk for dessert rather than deep-fried pies or cookies. Or have some fruit for dessert when you get home or back to work. If you want to treat yourself to a decadent dessert, then share it with a friend.



What is Moderation?

Moderation really depends on your own eating habits. If you only eat out on special occasions or less than once a month, then sit back and enjoy your meal. But, if you're a regular at fast food chains and take-out counters, then do try to make nutritious choices as often as possible.



Choose Healthy Foods Whenever and Wherever You Eat Out



Choose these more often...

Instead of...

At the coffee shop or breakfast stop:

Low-fat whole grain muffin

Danish, doughnut

Whole grain bagel with a small amount of light cream cheese, peanut butter or lower-fat cheese

Bagel loaded with cream cheese

Poached egg or plain omelette with unbuttered whole grain toast

Fried egg sandwich with sausage or bacon, cheese omelet with hash browns

Coffee or tea with milk

Coffee or tea with cream

At the deli or sandwich counter:

Whole grain bread or bun

White bread, croissant

Lean meat such as ham, chicken, turkey, roast beef

Higher fat options such as salami, pepperoni, bologna, bacon, meatballs, egg salad, tuna salad, salmon salad

Veggie dog

Hot dog

Green salad, fruit salad, bean salad

Caesar salad, potato salad, macaroni salad

Unsweetened fruit juice, lower-fat milk

Fruit drink, soft drink



Choose these more often...

Instead of...

At the pizza parlour:

Whole wheat or other type of whole grain crust

White crust

Vegetarian or Hawaiian pizza

Pizza with the works

Lower-fat toppings like ham, chicken, mushrooms, peppers, tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant, artichokes, lower-fat cheese

Higher-fat toppings like bacon, sausage, salami, pepperoni, olives, extra cheese

At the Asian eatery:

Steamed dumplings, steamed buns

Deep-fried chicken balls, sweet and sour pork

Grilled, steamed or stir-fried veggies

Deep-fried veggies like tempura

Fresh spring rolls, sushi, cucumber salad

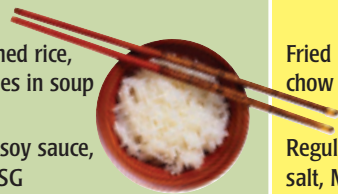
Deep-fried egg rolls

Steamed rice, noodles in soup

Fried rice, fried noodles, chow mein

Light soy sauce, no MSG

Regular soy sauce, salt, MSG



At the chicken eatery:

Barbecued, baked, grilled or stir-fried chicken with the skin removed

Deep-fried chicken fingers or nuggets

Grilled chicken sandwich or fajita

Chicken salad sandwich made with mayonnaise

Rice, baked potato with low-fat sour cream or yogurt

French-fries

Chicken soup with whole grain crackers or whole wheat roll

Chicken pot pie

Green salad with lower-fat dressing

Creamy coleslaw, salads made with mayonnaise

Choose these more often...

Instead of...

At the burger place:

Plain or child-sized hamburger on a whole grain bun if available

Double or triple-decker burger with cheese

Grilled chicken sandwich, veggie burger

Deep-fried chicken or fish sandwiches

Baked potato with either chili or low-fat sour cream



French fries with gravy, baked potato with cheese and sour cream

"Light" menu items

Super-sized combo meals

Frozen yogurt cones

Ice cream, cookies, pies

Lower-fat milk, unsweetened fruit juice

Milkshake, soft drinks

At the Italian eatery:

Broiled, baked, grilled or poached fish, chicken or veal

Breaded, fried or deep-fried fish, chicken or veal

Pasta with vegetables in tomato sauce sprinkled with Parmesan cheese

Lasagna, pasta in cream sauce

Coffee with milk, café latté or cappuccino made with lower-fat milk

Coffee with cream



Fresh fruit, fruit crisp

Cheesecake, desserts with pastry or whipped cream

Try recipes from Anne Lindsay's "The New Lighthearted Cookbook".

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Fast Foods and Eating Out

Simple steps to making healthy choices



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