

Dining Out - Avoid Stress By Planning Ahead

A lot of patients express that it's often difficult to follow their meal plan when dining out. Following your meal plan at home and buying suitable groceries is one thing, but going out to eat can pose some challenges. Here are some tips on how to stay on track with your meal plan and maintain your healthy lifestyle. Remember, dining out doesn't have to be overwhelming if you are knowledgeable about the healthy options that are available to you. Bon appetit!



Planning ahead: Going out to eat doesn't have to be stressful if you can plan ahead. If you know you are going to a certain restaurant, chances are good that the restaurant will have a pamphlet and/or online nutrition facts table to help you choose the healthiest foods available. Restaurants such as McDonalds and Swiss Chalet even have nutrition calculators online so that you can pick and choose menu items ahead of time and view the potential calorie, protein, fat, and carbohydrate totals from that meal.

Side dishes: A lot of restaurants offer a wide variety of side dishes so it is important to be able to discern the more nutritious options. Here are a few ideas of healthy side dishes:

- *Garden salad* – get the dressing on the side and make sure to pick a low calorie dressing such as fat-free Italian or balsamic vinaigrette.
- *Yogurt parfait*
- *Baked potato with salsa* instead of sour cream
- *Fruit slices or fruit cups* (i.e. Wendy's mandarin oranges cup)
- *Broth soup*, such as low-sodium chicken noodle (*Swiss Chalet's* Chicken Soup is only 90calories with 3grams of fat, 190mg sodium, and 15 grams protein!)

Main entree: Here are a few simple ideas to follow when choosing your entree:

- Go for baked or grilled meat instead of fried or battered
- Choose lean meats such as chicken or fish, or choose the vegetarian option of the same meal
- Get thin-crust pizza with low-fat cheese instead of thick or stuffed crust.
- Get a "kid's meal" if you're at a fast food restaurant – smaller portion sizes!
- Choose lower-fat condiments such as mustard, fat-free Italian dressing or light mayonnaise.
- Don't sprinkle extra salt on foods – fast food items tend to be high in sodium already.
- Look for the "Health Check" options if they are available

Beverages and Dessert: choose lower-fat dessert options such as frozen yogurt, fruit sherbet or low-fat ice cream. For drinks, try low-fat milk, coffee/tea, or of course water!

Remember, dining out doesn't have to be stressful as long as you plan ahead and know what healthy options are out there

Emily Kielbiski, Bariatric Educator, B.A.Sc., Applied Human Nutrition

References:
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