
Preparing for Heart Healthy Dining

Dining out can be a pleasant event but it's important to keep your health in mind. Restaurant meals can be very high in calories, unhealthy fats, and sodium if you're not careful.

Here are some tips to help you prepare:

- Plan for the whole day. When you know you will be dining out, try to make healthy choices the rest of the day. Limit the calories, saturated fat, and sodium in your other meals and snacks.
- Choose the restaurant wisely. Look for restaurants that have healthier options. Avoid “all you can eat” restaurants that make portion control difficult.
- Look up nutrition information for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. Restaurants with more than 20 locations must make nutrition information available. Check their website or ask at the restaurant.
- Look for healthier menu selections. Some restaurants highlight menu items that are lower in calories or sodium.
- Plan the meal. Think of the meal in terms of calories, saturated fats, and sodium. For instance, if you know you want dessert then to skip the appetizer.
- Make special requests if needed. You can ask for items to be prepared without extra salt or fat. You can also ask for things like salad dressing, sauces, and gravy to be on the side. Substitutions can also be requested at some restaurants, for example a fruit cup in place of French fries
- Avoid the saltshaker. Add additional flavor by using pepper or lemon juice.

Tips for Healthy Eating when Dining Out

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose fresh fruit instead of fruit juice• Choose higher fiber foods like whole grain pancakes, steel cut oatmeal, or 100% whole wheat, rye, or pumpernickel bread• Choose low fat milk or yogurt options• Limit or avoid items like donuts, muffins, biscuits, croissants, bacon, sausage, corn beef hash, and Danishes or other pastries
Appetizer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skip the breadbasket or tortilla chips• Choose appetizers that have not been fried• Choose appetizers that include non-starchy vegetables
Soup	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be aware that most restaurant soups are very high sodium• Choose broth-based soups over creamy soups
Salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask for salad dressing on the side, dip your fork in the dressing before each bite instead of pouring the dressing over the salad• Use oil and vinegar to dress your salad, or an oil-based dressing• Ask for your salad to be served without cheese or croutons
Main Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose foods that are baked, broiled, grilled, roasted, poached, steamed, or stir-fried• Avoid deep fried foods• Avoid cream sauces, cheese sauces, and gravy
Dessert	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share a dessert with your dining companion(s)• Look for desserts that contain fresh fruit