

STAY HEALTHY WHEN YOU DINE OUT

When you think of dining out, you may think of overfilled plates and indulgent, anything-but-nutritious choices. Here are some nutrition pitfalls to be aware of when you're eating out, especially at a fast food restaurant:

- Foods high in calories and sodium.
- Menu offerings that are low in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.
- Not a lot of fruits and vegetables (aside from potatoes in the form of French fries!).
- Inexpensive offerings may be the least healthy—it can be difficult to get good value and eat well.
- Marketing of “combo” meals simplifies ordering but promotes overconsumption!

If you take a closer look, however, there are plenty of restaurants serving up health-promoting fares that will help you stay fit—and still enjoy a meal out. Armed with the right tools, you can find the choices that are best for you. The following apps and websites will help you eat well at any establishment, from a drive-thru to a five-star restaurant.

Smartphone Apps:

Food Tripping

Designed to help people find alternatives to fast food, this app will send you in the direction of the nearest farmers' market, salad spot, and more...wherever you are.

HealthyOut

Search by location to find healthy restaurant meals near you. You can tailor your search to your own dietary needs, focusing on foods that are heart-healthy, low carb, paleo, good for controlling glucose, and more.

HappyCow

Find vegan restaurants, cafes, and grocery stores based on location. Includes options for dine-in and take-out. Includes filters based on location, type of establishment, cuisine, and ratings.

Local Eats

Curated dining guide created for travelers and local diners who prefer local businesses rather than chain restaurants

Calorie King

Get nutrition info for fast food restaurants to make smart choices while on the go. Allows comparison of calories, carbs, and fat among food items. This app is also helpful when stopping at grocery and convenience stores while on the road.

Google Maps

Find location restaurants with dine-in, take-out, and delivery options based on location. Get ratings and reviews, plus create lists of favorites. Filter by location, ratings, and cuisine.

Websites:

Healthy Dining Finder (www.healthydiningfinder.com)

Created in partnership with the National Restaurant Association, all restaurants listed are reviewed by dietitians to determine which restaurants and menu items qualify as healthy options. Search a national database of restaurants based on location.

Eat Well Guide (www.eatwellguide.org)

Search your location and whatever type of food you're looking for—vegetarian, organic, healthy—and the Eat Well Guide will give you a map of the nearest restaurants you should head to, complete with a map, hours, distance from you and other places you might be interested in nearby.

Google (www.google.com)

Your best ally when it comes to eating out! Prepare yourself for any restaurant meal by looking up the menu before you go. Decide what you're going to eat beforehand—don't wait until you're swayed by your hunger, what your friends suggest, or what looks good at the next table. Planning ahead is key!

CalorieKing (www.calorieking.com)

Get nutrition facts for your favorite brands and fast food restaurants when you are on the go. Help make choices based on menu items. Trying to decide between menu items or different establishments? CalorieKing allows you to compare and make the best choice.

But how do I know what a healthy meal looks like for me?

All of these great resources won't help you one bit if you don't know what the numbers mean, and how to use them. Find out how many calories you need daily by logging onto www.myplate.gov. This will help guide you toward selecting foods that fit into your daily calorie budget.

You can also use MyPlate as a rough guide for how to structure your plate. Ideally, your meal will look like this: ½ vegetables, ¼ lean protein, ¼ grains, preferably whole. Think about how to put a typical meal you might get at a restaurant on MyPlate. Here's how:

Instead of two slices of pizza:

Order: One slice of pizza and a garden salad with vinaigrette dressing.

Instead of a foot-long turkey sub with mayo on white bread:

Order: A six-inch turkey sub with lettuce, tomato, peppers, and onions and oil and vinegar.

Instead of a burger:

Order: A grilled chicken salad with fruit

Instead of a whole sandwich:

Order: Half sandwich, half vegetable-based soup like minestrone

Instead of pad thai:

Order: Sautéed vegetables and tofu with a side of brown rice