

What About Eating Out?

It takes effort and commitment to change eating habits. People can't easily change overnight. In fact, it's best to ease into new habits slowly. This way you can form new, positive habits that will be just as comfortable as your old ones. You'll find that your new, healthy lifestyle will help you look better, feel better and have a healthier heart! Going out to eat doesn't mean losing control of your eating plan. By thinking ahead and making smart choices, you can follow a low-saturated-fat, low-cholesterol diet almost anywhere you go!

Study the menu before the server comes and feel free to ask how the food is made. And remember, you don't have to finish everything. You can always bring home a to-go box.



What should I order?

- Ask about low-fat or fat-free choices.
- Ask the server to make substitutions like steamed vegetables instead of french fries.
- Use the basic guidelines of your healthy eating plan when choosing a main dish. Pick lean meat, fish or skinless chicken.
- Make sure your entrée is broiled, baked, grilled, steamed or poached instead of fried.
- Order vegetable side dishes and ask that any sauces or butter be left off.
- Ask for low-calorie salad dressing or a lemon to squeeze on your salad instead of dressing.
- Ask for baked, boiled or roasted potatoes instead of fried. And ask for them without the butter and sour cream.
- Order fresh fruit or fruit sorbet in place of cake, pie or ice cream.
- When it seems that everything on the menu is "off limits," ask if the chef will make you a fruit or vegetable platter. Most chefs are happy to do so.

What should I avoid?

- Push the butter out of your way — or ask that it be removed. Ask for soft margarine instead.
- Order your dressings and sauces on the side so you can control how much you use.
- Stay away from fried appetizers and creamy soups. Begin your meal with broth-based soup like minestrone or gazpacho.
- At salad bars, stay away from high-fat items like cheese, cream dressings, chopped eggs, croutons, olives and bacon bits.

- Ask that your food be made without butter or cream sauces. You'll be surprised at how delicious meat, fish and chicken can be when broiled "dry."
- Take the skin off poultry when it arrives, and remove visible fat from meat.

What about ethnic restaurants?

- At Oriental restaurants, order a stir-fried chicken or fish and vegetable dish. A steamed main dish is an even better choice. Instead of fried rice, ask for steamed rice.
- At Italian restaurants, choose red marinara sauces over white, creamy ones. Try a fish dish or meatless pasta instead of entrées made with sausage or meatballs. Eat plain Italian bread instead of buttery garlic bread. And go easy on the grated Parmesan cheese.
- At Mexican restaurants, enjoy salsa or picante sauce, but limit guacamole, cheese and sour cream. Opt for corn tortillas over flour ones, and avoid refried beans. Try soups and salads instead of fried foods, and look for fresh seafood on the menu.

How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit StrokeAssociation.org.

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor. For example:

What can I eat at fast-food restaurants?

How can I control the portions?

Your contribution to the American Heart Association supports research that helps make publications like this possible.

The statistics in this sheet were up to date at publication. For the latest statistics, see the Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics Update at americanheart.org/statistics.

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