

Eating out can be a part of a healthful diet. Aim to prepare balanced meals at home most often and keep exercise a part of your routine. It is easier than you think to make wise choices when you eat out. Just follow these tips:

- **Prepare in advance.** If possible, take a look at the menu ahead of time and find a few balanced choices you like.
- **Be the first one to order.** You will not be tempted to change your mind when you hear what others order. Be sure to read the menu carefully.
- **Go for balance.** Choose meals with a balance of:
  - Lean protein like fish, chicken or beans.
  - Fruits and vegetables. Ask about side fruit and vegetable salads, steamed or roasted vegetable options.
  - Grains. Aim for whole grains like whole wheat bread, whole-wheat pizza crust and brown rice.
- **Watch portion sizes.** Start with half of your meal and box the rest for home or split one meal between two people.
- **Avoid buffets and supersizing.** The price may seem better, but the quantity is too much. These choices can lead to feeling too full.
- **Drink water or low-fat milk.** Fill up on foods instead of fluids. Limit soda, juice and sweetened beverages. Do not drink energy drinks. As a bonus, choosing water saves money.
- **Ask for substitutions.** Do not be afraid to ask for items to be made differently or to substitute items. For example, ask for grilled chicken instead of fried. Ask for fruit or vegetables instead of French fries.

### Restaurant Tips

- Go easy on condiments, special sauces and dressings, and ask for them on the side.
- Ask for your foods to be baked, broiled or grilled, instead of fried.
- Limit foods described as buttery, fried, crispy, creamed, in gravy, au gratin or in cheese sauce.
- Share French fries, onion rings or potato chips with everyone at the table.
- Have bread and tortilla chips served with the meal instead of before it.
- Skip dessert or split dessert as a family.
- Load your pizza and sandwiches with vegetable toppings.
- Order a non-fried appetizer or a salad for a lighter meal.
- Fill up at least half of your plate with fruits and vegetables first if you choose the buffet. Take no more than two trips. Use the small plate, which holds less food. Choose one dessert that is your favorite.

## Fast Food Tips

Fast food is not off limits but should be eaten in moderation. Even if you are eating fast food, you do not have to eat it fast! Do not eat in the car. Instead, sit at a table at home or in the restaurant. You will likely eat less and enjoy the food more.

Tips to try:

- Water instead of soda, juice, lemonade or sweet ice tea.
- Apple slices instead of French fries or the smallest order of French fries.
- Grilled chicken instead of fried chicken or fish.
- Single slice of vegetable pizza.
- Get condiments (mayonnaise or dressing) on the side.
- Deli sandwich on whole-grain bread.
- Small hamburger.
- Bean tacos.
- Baked potato.
- Salad with grilled chicken and dressing on the side.

## Other helpful teaching sheets

- # [1558](#) Go, Slow, and Whoa foods
- # [1557](#) Packing a Healthy Lunch
- # [1556](#) Healthy Food Shopping

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**For other health and wellness information, check out this resource:**

<https://kidshealth.org/ChildrensWi/en/parents>

**This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**