

Heart-Healthy Tips for Dining Out



The average American eats out three or four times each week. When you learn how to choose heart-healthy options, you can enjoy eating at restaurants and stay healthy. Here are some tips to follow.

Eat Smaller Portions

The portion sizes at restaurants have grown over the years, and large portions may lead you to eat more calories than you need. Here are a few ways to eat less:

- **Order a “to-go” box ahead of time.** Place half of your entree in the box **before** you start eating. Then bring the leftovers home to enjoy later.
- **Split an entree with a friend.** You save money and calories this way!
- **Ask for a smaller portion.** Some restaurants offer half portions of their entrees.
- **Eat a healthy snack before you go to the restaurant.** This ensures that you are not too hungry when you get there.
- **Order an appetizer instead of an entree.** Some healthy options might include fruit, steamed or grilled seafood, or low-fat soup.

Choose Water

Drink water instead of soft drinks or other high-calorie beverages. Water keeps you hydrated without the added sugar and calories. For extra flavor, ask for a twist of lemon or lime.

Make Special Requests and Ask for Substitutions

Speak up and ask for food the way you want it! Restaurants are usually happy to prepare foods the way you request. For example:

- Ask for your meal to be prepared without added butter or salt.
- If your sandwich comes with fries, ask for a tossed salad (dressing on the side), a cup of vegetable soup, or fruit instead.

Order Dressings and Sauces on the Side

The calories and fat from gravies, salad dressings, and sauces can add up. Order these kinds of toppings on the side and dip your fork in the dressing, sauce, or gravy before taking a bite. You still get great flavor, but you will use less than half the regular amount.

Choose Lean Meats

- If you order beef, choose lean cuts, such as round, sirloin, or loin. Other lean meats include pork tenderloin, turkey, skinless chicken, fish, and shellfish.
- Choose grilled or broiled meats, poultry, fish, and shellfish instead of fried options.
- Aim to eat a 3- to 4-ounce portion of meat (3 ounces is about the size of a deck of cards). You can always take the leftovers home.

Enjoy a Healthy Dessert

If you want to end your meal with something sweet, opt for fruit or sorbet. Even if these choices are not on the menu, many restaurants offer them. Splitting a dessert is another great option.

