

Fast Food: Healthier Choices

The average American eats out about 4 times a week, often in a fast food restaurant. The bad news is that most fast food meals are high in fat, sugar, salt and calories and low in vitamins A and C, fiber and calcium. The good news is that healthier choices are available and fast foods can fit in a healthy diet. Check out these tips for the health-conscious fast food eater.

✓ **Choose your restaurant wisely.**

Look for restaurants with menus that offer healthier choices. Restaurants like Subway, Wendy's and Arby's make it easy to order a healthy meal. If the menu only has burgers and fries like Rally's, keep on driving to a restaurant with better choices. To find a fast food restaurant with healthier choices visit www.healthydinerfinder.com.

✓ **Make healthy decisions.**

Ask for the restaurant's nutrition information and determine their healthier choices. Grilled chicken sandwiches without mayonnaise and regular size hamburgers leave room for fries and a soft drink. If you order a higher calorie sandwich, choose water and a side salad to balance it. Try to keep your fast food meals between 500 to 600 calories or about 1/3 of your total daily calories.

✓ **Use portion control.**

It may cost only a few cents more, but getting the next size up of fast foods is no nutrition bargain. Most people don't realize how many empty calories they are adding to their meal when they go from a medium soft drink or fries to the large. A large soft drink (32 ounces) adds about 310 calories and an large order of French fries (7 ounces) adds about 600 calories.

✓ **Hold the extras.**

Adding high fat ingredients like bacon, cheese and special sauces add lots of hidden calories. A slice of cheese adds 70 calories, two strips of bacon add an additional 70 calories and a tablespoon of mayonnaise adds 100 calories. Something to keep in mind- it only takes an extra 100 calories a day to add an extra ten pounds of body fat over the course of a year. So lighten your lunch by leaving off that cheese.

✓ **Rethink your drink.**

Soft drinks are nothing but empty calories from sugar that can quickly add up to extra inches on your waistline. A small soft drink (16 ounces) is nothing but 10 teaspoons of sugar mixed with flavorings, preservatives and caffeine. Order something your body needs like water for a real nutrition bargain. Or consider ordering low fat milk for its calcium or orange juice for its vitamin C, potassium and folic acid. If none of these options sound appealing, then try a diet soft drink or unsweetened ice tea.

✓ **Remember balance, variety and moderation.**

If you do have a fast food meal, be sure to eat plenty of nutrient-packed foods like fruits and vegetables the rest of the day. The USDA's MyPyramid can help guide your choices.

Healthier Fast Food Choices

Here are a few ideas for fast food meals that are lower in calories and fat. These all tend to be high in sodium so watch your intake the rest of the day. Bring along a piece of fresh fruit to round out your meal.

Food item	Calories	Fat grams	Cholesterol mg	Sodium Mg	Fiber Gm
ARBYS (www.arbys.com)					
Santa Fe Salad with Grilled Chicken	283	9	72	521	5
Seasoned Tortilla Chips	71	3	0	472	1
Light Buttermilk Ranch Dressing	112	6	1	25	1
Water					
Total Meal	465	18	73	1018	7
BURGER KING (www.burgerking.com)					
Tendergrill Chicken (no mayo or sauce)	400	7	70	1090	4
Strawberry Flavored Applesauce	90	0	0	0	0
1% Milk	110	2.5	10	130	0
Total Meal	600	9	80	1220	4
MCDONALDS (www.mcdonalds.com)					
Hamburger	250	9	25	520	2
Apple Dippers	35	0	0	0	1
1% Milk Jug	100	2.5	10	125	0
Total Meal	310	12	18	570	3
Caesar Salad with Grilled Chicken	220	6	75	890	3
Low Fat Balsamic Vinaigrette	40	3	0	730	0
Fruit & Yogurt Parfait (w/o granola)	160	2	5	85	1
Water or Unsweetened Tea	0	0	0	0	0
Total Meal	420	11	80	1705	4
SUBWAY (www.subway.com)					
6" cold low fat sub (8 to choose from) No cheese or mayonnaise	280	4.5	20	1000	4
Baked Lays	130	1.5	0	150	2
100% Fruit Juice	100	0	0	15	0
Total Meal	410	6	20	1165	6
WENDY'S (www.wendys.com)					
Plain Baked Potato	280	0	0	25	7
Small Chili	220	6	35	780	5
Caesar Side Salad with Light ranch dressing (w/o croutons)	170	12	25	640	3
Small Diet Soft Drink	0	0	0	0	0
Total Meal (8% fat)	660	19	60	1445	15
Jr. Hamburger	280	9	30	590	1
Caesar Side Salad with Light Ranch Dressing (w/o croutons)	170	12	25	640	3
Mandarin Oranges	80	0	0	15	1
Total Meal (35% fat)	480	21	55	1250	5