

Fast Food or Fast Fat?

Katie Bogue, Registered Dietitian
San Diego Regional 5 a Day Campaign

Did you know that Americans eat out an average of 4-5 times a week? For many of us, grabbing a burger or pizza is part of our everyday routine. Fast food can be inexpensive, easy, and good tasting. You can be satisfying your hunger within ten minutes or less. Plus, you don't have to wash dishes afterwards!

But is fast food healthy? That depends on your choices! The average restaurant meal contains almost an entire day's worth of calories and fat. Not to mention too much sodium and limited vitamins, minerals, and fiber. But with a little thought, even eating out can fit into a healthy diet.

Here are some healthy fast food choices you can make:

- Choose fast food restaurants that have healthy options. For example, fried chicken restaurants often do not offer non-fried foods. Ethnic fast food restaurants frequently have many low-fat menu items.
- Balance eating out with smaller, healthy meals. If you know you are eating pizza out tonight, choose a lighter lunch, like a salad or low-fat sandwich.
- Stick with regular-sized items rather than the super size.
- Drink water, milk, juice or diet soda with your meals. "Super-sizing" a regular soda can add over 450 calories and 35 teaspoons of sugar! Even though upgrading to a super-size many only cost an additional \$.50, those two quarters are buying you almost twice the calories!
- Ask to have sauces and salad dressings served on the side so you can decide how much to use. A ½ cup of regular Ranch salad dressing weighs in at over 40 grams of fat!
- Fried, basted, escalloped, braised, au gratin, crispy, pan-fried, sautéed, stewed or stuffed foods are high fat foods. Look for foods that are grilled, baked, or steamed.
- Try vegetables, such as broccoli, bell peppers, or zucchini on your pizza.
- Choose pasta with a red sauce rather than white. The base of white sauce is usually cream or butter.
- Head to restaurants more often than buffets. It's hard not to overeat when it's all you can eat!
- Enjoy your favorite high-fat food in moderation: share with a friend or save them for special occasions.

For more information about eating healthy, go to www.sd5aday.org.