

# Fast food...forbidden?

We all know that we don't eat as well as we should every day. That's okay. Sometimes we're going to crave something sweet or salty, and sometimes we're going to want to eat out or pick up some fast food. The key is to do this only occasionally and to make wise choices when we do. There are plenty of ways to satisfy that craving without going overboard. Check out these ideas.

## Good things come in small packages.

If fast food restaurants offer several sandwich sizes, pick the smallest. Bypass hamburgers with two or three beef patties, which can pack more than 1,000 calories and 70 grams of fat. Instead, choose a regular or children's sized hamburger, which are about 250 to 300 calories. Also, save about 300 calories by asking for the small serving of french fries or onion rings.

## Balance your meal with a healthy side option.

Better yet, skip those fries and onion rings altogether. Many fast food restaurants are now offering healthier sides. Choose a side salad with low-fat dressing, a baked potato, fruit bowl or a yogurt and fruit option.



## Grilled is the way to go.

Crispy chicken sandwiches and fried fish fillets are high in fat and calories. Select the grilled, roasted or baked lean meats such as chicken, turkey, ham or lean roast beef.

## Go green.

Large entrée salads with grilled chicken and garden vegetables with low-fat or fat-free dressing on the side are a great way to cut the calories.

**“Part of leading a healthy lifestyle is learning how to make good choices, no matter the situation. It's not realistic to eliminate restaurants, sweets or fast food entirely. By making smart choices, we can still stay on track, even when we're eating out with friends or on the go.”**

— Lori Mooney, RD, LD,  
a dietitian for the Center for Healthy Weight & Nutrition  
at Nationwide Children's Hospital



Just remember, regular salad dressing can have 300 or more calories per packet. Also, skip deep fried options or those with deep fried shells. Stay away from breaded chicken options or other fried toppings. And leave off the extras such as cheese, bacon bits, croutons and fried chips.

## Watch out for condiments.

Instead, ask for healthy options and substitutions. Reduced-fat mayonnaise or mustard is great on a sandwich. Request salsa with your meal at a Mexican restaurant, instead of cheese sauce or shredded cheese. Avoid tartar

sauce and sour cream, or at least ask for it on the side so you can control the amount on the sandwich.

## Make smart drink choices.

Instead of high-calorie beverages like soda (a 32 ounce can have about 400 calories), order diet soda, water, or unsweetened iced tea. Skip the shakes, too. They can contain 1,000 calories and enough saturated fat for the entire day.

Experts from the Center for Healthy Weight and Nutrition at Nationwide Children's Hospital provided the information for this column.