



Eating Healthy at Restaurants

Choose healthy items no matter where you dine.

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HEALTHY TIPS FOR DINING OUT WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

Children take in more calories when they eat meals or snacks prepared outside of the home, such as at fast-food restaurants. When this happens, children don't get the right amount or mix of nutrients to help them grow and be healthy. The average person eats outside the home four or more times per week – that's 18 meals per month! Dining out can really take a toll on your child's diet and overall health. Fortunately, most eating places have healthier options, plus there are other things you can do when eating out to help your child eat better.

FAST FOOD DINING

Choose "Kid-Friendly" Fast Food Places. Choose fast-food restaurants that serve healthier options for kids' meals. Several restaurants have committed to include milk and fruit instead of soda and French fries in their kids' meals.

Use GO and WHOA to Help You Make a Healthy Choice in Restaurants. Substitute healthier "**GO** sides" in place of "**WHOA** sides," such as baked potatoes, side salads, apple slices or mandarin oranges.

Keep an Eye on Portion Sizes. Many fast-food places encourage upsizing and serve more food than one person needs at one meal. Children need small portion sizes. Every bite should deliver health-boosting nutrients for growing bodies and minds.

Rethink the Drinks. Encourage plain water, fat-free milk (as calcium is important at all ages, but especially for growing bones), or make your own special "soda" from the soda fountain by adding sparkling water to your fruit juice.

Keep healthy GO snacks on the GO! Bring fresh fruit or low-fat cheese and whole-grain crackers with you. When your child says "I'm hungry!" you can provide a *healthy* snack. This way you won't feel compelled to ease your child's hunger by making a drive-thru run.



Choosing fast food restaurants with a kid's play area is also a great way to keep your kids active in any weather!



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SIT DOWN DINING

Eating with children at sit-down restaurants provides opportunities to introduce your children to a variety of new healthy foods. Try these tips the next time you enjoy dining at a sit-down restaurant.

Choose “Kid-Friendly” Dining Restaurants. Choose restaurants that cater to children. Many restaurants have a nutritious children's menu that includes smaller portion sizes. Some even have menus available online so you can check out the options when deciding where to go.



Try New Foods! Encourage tasting new foods when dining out. The more variety in the diet, the more nutrients provided. Choose two or three healthy menu items. Let your child pick one. Offer your child a bite or two from your meal or order plain foods with the sauce on the side.



Fruit First. Ask your server for cut up or mashed fruit for a younger child to enjoy as an appetizer. This keeps them occupied and contributes to the 1 cup of fruit they need per day. This is a great alternative to filling up on bread and chips before a meal.

Simple is Best. Request that a child's vegetables be made without added salt. Often side dishes, even steamed vegetables, are highly seasoned. Order a plain baked potato or sweet potato, mash and season to taste at the table.

Sharing is Fun! Try splitting a platter of pasta for the whole family to sample or ordering one slice of cheesecake with four forks. This provides an opportunity to teach proper portion control when you share.

Make physical activity part of dining out. If you have restaurants within 15 to 20 minutes walking distance, you can walk with your family to a restaurant, or park your car down the street or at a nearby park and walk the rest of the way. All you need is a comfortable pair of shoes.



REFERENCES

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