

8 TIPS TO PRACTICE WHEN EATING FAST FOOD MEALS

Start to teach these tips and tactics from the early years. Serve as a role model.

Let your actions speak louder than words. Our kids are eating out more than ever before.

Fast food restaurant meals are typically higher in calories, total fat, sodium, added sugars and light on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and dairy products. Put these 8 tips into action to transform fast food meals into more wholesome meals. By using these tips with your children you'll teach them skills to apply throughout their lives.

1 Don't treat fast food meals as special occasions

This promotes splurging on less healthy choices. Most families eat out far too often today to let the special occasion mentality apply. Be responsible when dining out at a fast food restaurant.



2 Go for whole grains

Take advantage of whole grain options such as: pizza with a whole grain crust or sandwiches on whole-wheat bread. Look for whole grain pasta, brown rice, oatmeal, and whole grain dry cereals. Any little bit helps.

3 Opt for lean meats and low-fat preparations

Chicken, fish and seafood are only healthier than red meat if they are not battered and fried and/or loaded with mayonnaise or mayonnaise-based special sauces. Opt for grilled items rather than fried or go vegetarian.

4 Be wary of the 'SPECIAL' sauces

Restaurants use fat to make foods please your palate and keep them moist. However, extra fat means extra calories. Special sauces are typically made with mayonnaise. Limit toppings like cheese, cheese sauce, and bacon. Try condiments that are low in fat and calories – mustard, vinegar, ketchup or barbecue sauce.

5 Use healthy strategies when enjoying pizza

Pizza can be a fun and healthy option. It's also easy to split and share. Keep pizza healthy by ordering a thin crust. Top it with plenty of vegetables. Go light on extra cheese and meat-based toppings. Order the size with just enough slices per eater. Lastly, partner a salad with your pizza.

6 Request healthy modifications

You are the customer. Don't hesitate to make special requests. Ask for salad dressing on the side or a vegetarian option. Use guacamole instead of mayonnaise. Balance your meal by adding vegetables into your entrée or as a side order.

7 Split and share menu item family style

Share both healthy and less healthy dishes family style. Portion out the right amount for you. If for some reason you can't split or share your food, ask for a take home container and have the rest for lunch the next day. Another strategy is to pack half of your plate right away when your order is served.

8 Skip sugary beverages, sip healthy

Sugar-sweetened carbonated soft drinks, fruit punch or sweetened iced tea is the usual beverage. They provide big gulp of calories with no nutrients. Skip them! Opt for a healthier beverage – water with lemon, low-fat milk, 100% fruit juice (in limited amounts particularly for young children).

Developed with Hope Warshaw, MMSc, RD, author of the book [Eat Out Eat Well – The Guide to Eating Healthy in Any Restaurant](#).



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