

Healthy Fast Foods

Lesson Four

Americans are spending HALF of their food dollars on meals purchased outside of the home. This fact makes the art of making healthy fast food choices a necessary survival skill in order for you to stay within your calorie guidelines and five percent of your recommended percentages of protein, carbohydrate and fat. With the popularity of fast food and the number of new restaurants on the rise, there are more food choices than ever. But you still need information about food other than what is on the menu.

The term “*Fast Food*” is commonly associated with hamburgers, greasy french fries, and cola. However, popular family restaurant menu items can be ordered “*to go*” without waiting for their preparation or standing in a long line. You can even pay with a credit card over the phone if you’re in a real hurry. Overall, fast food does not have to be high-calorie and high-fat food.

Here are some helpful tips:

Choose three healthy fast food meals and breakfast foods that you can rotate throughout a month.

Plan these three meals around your weekly schedule and have fruit, baked tortilla chips and fresh vegetables available at home to make the meal complete. For example, the following fast foods can be planned ahead of time and incorporated into your weekly menus.

1. **Monday** – Lunch: A soft beef taco from Taco Bell
2. **Tuesday** – Dinner: ¼ lb white meat chicken from Boston Market
3. **Wednesday** – Lunch: A turkey bagel sandwich from the deli
4. **Thursday** – Breakfast: An Egg McMuffin from McDonald’s
5. **Friday** – Lunch: A grilled chicken sandwich from Wendy’s

Don’t hesitate to make special requests to modify your favorite fast foods. If your favorite burrito comes with sour cream, guacamole and cheese, request to have it prepared with chicken, black beans, lettuce and salsa with cheese on the side and an order of fresh tomatoes and pico de gallo.

Take-out from the local grocery store can be faster than fast. Sushi, lean roll-up or pocket sandwiches, broth-based homemade soups, crusty bread rolls, spring rolls, and steamed vegetable dishes packaged to-go are ideal quick meals.

Avoid buffets and all-you-can-eat restaurants. Foods offered on buffet steam tables are generally high in fat (fat is added to help food taste fresh longer).

Split entrees and large portions of meat when the portion is more than the appropriate serving size. If you do not have a dining companion to share with, take the extra food home.

Instead of a regular omelet with cheese, order an egg-white omelet with onions, mushrooms, green peppers and/or tomatoes.

Do's and Don'ts of Fast Food Cuisine

Keep the guidelines below in mind when making healthy, low calorie fast food choices.

Burger Stands

- Keep it plain – order regular hamburgers dry, without extras such as cheese, bacon, chili, sautéed mushrooms, sauces, etc., and add your own condiments.
- Find burger places that charbroil meat rather than griddle fry.
- Order single, regular, or kids' hamburgers or cheeseburgers instead of the designer burgers such as belt busters, Whoppers, Big, double, or triple burgers.

BBQ

- Order smoked turkey or chicken (skinless or remove it yourself) instead of brisket, beef, pork, or ribs.
- Choose a baked potato, beans, or corn-on-the-cob instead of potato or pasta salad, coleslaw, french fries, or fried okra.

Mexican

- Leave the shell when eating the taco or fajita salads and save yourself about 30 grams of fat.
- Use extra taco sauce, salsa, hot sauce, pico de gallo, mole sauce, or verde sauce instead of dressing.
- Order fajita meat and vegetables dry to avoid oils used during cooking.
- Special order burritos and soft tacos with the cheese, sour cream, and guacamole on the side.
- If possible request whole beans, black beans, instead of refried beans that have more fat.

- Mexican or Spanish rice, black beans, a chicken breast, and pico de gallo makes an ideal meal. Roll it up inside a corn tortilla with pico de gallo.

Chicken

- Remove the skin on rotisserie or fried chicken.
- Eat plain vegetables or salads such as green beans, mashed potatoes without gravy, new or baked potatoes, corn-on-the-cob, or even baked beans rather than Caesar salads, dressing, macaroni and cheese, fried, scalloped, or creamed vegetables, or vegetable casseroles, or soufflés.
- Skip the butter, gravy, and salad dressing.

Chinese or Asian

- Order steamed instead of fried rice, vegetables or entrees.
- Order sauces on the side.
- Avoid the deep fried, or sweet and sour dishes, entrées with nuts (i.e. cashews, almonds, or peanuts), egg rolls, and fried wontons.
- Clear soups, dumpling soups, or hot and sour soups are healthier than egg-drop soup.
- Some healthy Asian dishes are Szechwan, moo goo gai pan, teriyaki, sushi, chow mien noodles and other prepared by steaming, poaching, or grilling.

Pizza or Italian

- Always order the thin crust pizza.
- Avoid sausage, hamburger, and pepperoni. Top with lean meat like barbeque or grilled chicken, seafood, Canadian bacon.
- Order half the cheese and ask for white cheese only.
- Top with vegetables like green/red bell pepper, onion, mushrooms, fresh artichoke hearts, extra tomato, broccoli, spinach or other fresh vegetables.
- Munch on bread sticks instead of garlic bread.
- Add a few black and green olives for flavor but don't go overboard because 5 large or 10 small olives are equal to 1 fat exchange. Wouldn't you rather have cheese!
- Use red pepper instead of Parmesan cheese.

Salad Bars

- Eat vegetables with low-calorie dressing on the side.
- Avoid meat, pasta, vegetable, or potato salads.
- Choose hard-boiled eggs, turkey meat, or cottage cheese for protein.
- Avoid toppings such as cheese, croutons and bacon.
- Avoid desserts such as puddings, Jell-salads, marshmallow or frozen desserts, cobblers. Choose fresh fruit instead.
- Melba toast, saltine crackers, table or oyster crackers are lower in fat and calories than butter or Ritz type varieties.
- Limit bread and avoid adding butter or margarine.
- Choose broth-based soups over creamed or cheese soups.

Knowledge Tester

List 2 Fast Food restaurants and the menu items you will order.

Restaurant: _____
Order: _____

Restaurant: _____
Order: _____

List 2 Dine In Restaurants and the menu items you will order

Restaurant: _____
Order: _____

Restaurant: _____
Order: _____

List 2 Restaurants and meals you can phone ahead for pickup or delivery.

Restaurant: _____
Order: _____

Restaurant: _____
Order: _____

List 3 special requests you will ask your server about your order when dining out.

Request #1:

Request #2

Request #3

Fast Food at a Glance

Restaurant	Item	Calories
Arby's	Apple Turnover (no icing)	250
	Grilled Chicken Deluxe	380
	Hot Ham and Swiss Melt	270
Domino's	Jr. Roast Beef	270
	Med. Cheese Thin Crust Pizza 2 slices	274
Hardee's	Charbroiled BBQ Chicken Sandwich	290
	Charbroiled Chick Salad w/FF Italian	215
McDonald's	Hamburger	280
	Plain Hotcakes	340
	Egg McMuffin	290
	Regular Hamburger	280
	Apple Bran Muffin	300
	Egg McMuffin w/orange juice	370
	Chicken McGrill Sandwich (no mayo)	340
	Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad	250
	Chef Salad w/FF herb vinaigrette	185
	Fruit n' Yogurt Parfait	280
Panda Express	Mixed Vegetables (5.5 oz.)	70
	Chicken w/Mushrooms (5.5 oz.)	170
	Beef and Broccoli (5.5 oz.)	180
	Steamed Rice (8 oz.)	220
	Vegetable Chow Mein (8 oz.)	300
Subway	Spicy Chicken w/peanuts (5.5 oz.)	200
	6" Turkey Breast Sub	254
	6" Roasted Chicken Breast Sub	311
	6" Ham Sub	261
	6" Subway Club	294
Taco Bell	6" Veggie Deluxe	200
	Bean Burrito	370
	Steak Soft Taco	210
Wendy's	Chicken Fiesta Burrito	370
	Jr. Hamburger	270
	Mandarin Chicken Salad	190
	Chicken Grill Sandwich	360
	Plain Baked Potato	270
	Sour Cream n' Chives Baked Potato	340
	Jr. Cheeseburger	310