

Guide to Eating Out with Diabetes

What should you eat when you go out to a restaurant? Or when you're a guest at someone's house? How about when you stop for fast food with the kids?

If you have diabetes, these are questions that might plague you. Diet is a key component to successfully managing diabetes, and eating out can make it difficult to control ingredients and portion sizes. But the truth is, eating out is a fact of life in our society.

The American Diabetes Association suggests working with your doctor and/or dietician to create a manageable food plan that fits your lifestyle. And depending on your lifestyle, that can mean business lunches, business dinners, fast food trips, or celebrations. In addition, here are some helpful tips to help ensure that you're able to stick to your plan while still enjoying yourself.



- **Be prepared.** If you know where you are going, look up the restaurant on the internet prior to arriving. Many times, menus are posted-and you can determine what choices fit within your plan. If no website exists for the particular restaurant or the menu is not available, simply call the restaurant and inquire about menu items.
- **Read the menu, and order creatively.** Healthy options are usually available, but sometimes you have to seek them out or ask for them specifically. For example, if you see that fresh berries come with a particular dessert, simply ask for a bowl of fresh berries. Sweeten them with a sugar substitute in the packets that are readily available at most eateries to make it more decadent. Many places offer healthy options denoted by symbols on the menu as well. Be on the lookout for those.
- **Substitute for those high fat sides.** Ask for more vegetables instead of French fries, or ask that your spinach be steamed instead of sautéed in garlic and oil. If no reasonable substitute is available, ask that the particular side be left off your plate.
- **Ask what's in the dish.** Chances are, those mashed potatoes were prepared with a substantial amount of butter. It's important that you know what's in the food so you can ask that it be left out, if need be.
- **Ask how the dish is prepared.** When something is pan seared, this usually involves a liberal portion of oil or butter. Ask instead that meats and fishes be broiled with no oil or butter. If you're at a fast food restaurant, look for grilled options.

- **Measure your food.** Whether you're eating out or at home, this is important. When you're out, use your hand as a guide. A serving of meat is roughly the size of your palm, your fist is approximately 1 cup, the end of your thumb is about a tablespoon, and the end of your index finger is roughly a teaspoon. This built-in measuring cup will help you control portions.
- **Time your meal.** This is extremely important in relationship to the use of insulin or other medications. Also, if the meal is late and occurs when you normally have a late night snack, consider swapping them. Have the snack during the time when you would usually be eating dinner.

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease suggests maintaining your daily food plan as an essential tool to avoiding complications. Remember, diabetes will not prevent you from eating out. Creativity and close attention to what you are eating will enable you to successfully manage it in accordance with your food plan.

Source: Qualityhealth.com, By Kyle McClure
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