

Restaurant Rehab

Using the Menu to Make Heart Healthy Choices

It can be hard to find heart healthy restaurant foods. Restaurant foods are often high in calories, fat, and sodium. For this reason, limit eating restaurant foods to 1 or 2 times a week. This includes fast food, sit down restaurants and carry out. Here are some other tips to help you make heart healthy choices.

Tips to reduce calories and fat

- Do an internet search to find nutrition information on the restaurant you will be dining at. Most chain restaurants will have this information available online, and some may have it on location in a binder or on their menu for you to look through. This can help you to make smarter choices that fit into your daily calorie budget.
- Restaurant meal portions are enough to feed at least 2 people. Split a meal with another person, or take at least half of the meal home for leftovers.
- Ask your server about ways to make a healthier meal. Avoid deep fried foods, remove skin from poultry, and cut off visible fat. Try grilled chicken instead of fried chicken to reduce fat and calories. Read menu descriptions for key words, like smothered or sauced. How they prepare your meal or even spice it can play a part in how healthy it is.
- Choose lean cuts of meat (round, sirloin, tenderloin cuts), fish, or poultry prepared with no added fat. Broiling, poached, grilled, baked, and roasted are usually good choices.
- Ask for sauces, gravies, margarine, butter, salad dressing, and sour cream on the side. Use small amounts of these for flavor. Dip your fork in them before getting your bite of food. Each bite will have the taste, but you will use less.
- Ask for other high fat ingredients on the side, like cheese and nuts. Many salads are loaded with high fat ingredients like these. You can still eat some of them, but if you get them on the side, you can control the amount.
- Pizza is often high in fat and sodium because of the large amount of cheese. Choose a thin crust to lower calories and select vegetables over pepperoni, bacon, ham, and sausage. If you want meat on a pizza, chicken is often a better choice. Remember to eat any pizza in moderation!



Tips to reduce sodium

- Do an internet search to find nutrition information on the restaurant you will be dining at. Most chain restaurants will have this information available online, and some may have it on location in a binder for you to look through. You can't always tell how much sodium is in a dish just by looking at its ingredients.
- Salt is the main source of sodium in the diet. When eating out, talk to your server to find out how foods are prepared. Ask that foods be prepared without salt when possible.
- Avoid soy sauce and teriyaki sauce, which contain very large amounts of sodium, or ask that your meal be prepared without these ingredients.
- Make careful selections in fast food restaurants. Try to order foods plain or ask for condiments and sauces on the side. Ask that salt not be added to French fries and hamburgers. Plain hamburgers are usually not too high in sodium.
 - Cheeseburgers, specialty burgers, sauces, Southern-style chicken and condiments, such as ketchup or catsup, barbecue sauce, and prepared mustard, contain large amounts of sodium. Try lettuce, tomato, and onion instead.
 - Avoid sausage, hot dogs, bacon, ham, and all cured meats. They contain too much sodium. Plain grilled chicken may have less.
- Select a fresh fruit cup or vegetable salad to start your meal as an appetizer instead of soup or other appetizers.
- Choose fresh meats (broiled or baked), fish, or poultry prepared without sauces and gravies.
- Choose plain rolls instead of salted bread sticks or salted crackers.
- Ask for sauces, gravies, and salad dressing not be added to foods or that they be served on the side. Use small amounts for flavor.
- Baked potatoes and steamed vegetables are good side choices if you avoid adding salt or fats, such as sour cream and butter. Avoid potato chips, potato sticks, onion rings, and hash browns or au gratin potatoes.
- Select a restaurant that has a salad bar. Assemble your salad with fresh, raw vegetables. Use only small amounts of these high sodium foods: olives, bacon bits, ham, pickled vegetables, regular salad dressing, and cheese. Consider oil and vinegar for salad dressing.

Restaurant foods to choose

The following pages have lists with some key words to help you choose **lower fat food options** in various types of restaurants. However, some low fat foods are very high in sodium. If you need to limit your sodium, avoid those marked as such.

Type of Food	Choose These Foods	Limit These Foods
American	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBQ sauce (high sodium) • Cocktail sauce (high sodium) • Green or red onions • Honey mustard • Lettuce and tomatoes • Mustard • Sautéed onions, peppers or mushrooms (with little or no oil) • Foods that are mesquite marinated, grilled, charbroiled or broiled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacon (strips, crisps or crumbled) • Blue cheese • Butter or garlic butter • Cheese (grated, melted, topped or smothered) • Guacamole • Sausage • Sour cream • Food that is battered or fried • Food that is described as large, jumbo, piled high, stacked, layered or stuffed
Chinese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assorted vegetables • Bean curd • Light wine sauce • Sizzling platter • Foods that are simmered, steamed, roasted or stir-fried 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duck • Egg Foo Young with cashews • Hoisin sauce • Foods that are breaded, fried or crispy
Continental/ French	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cajun spiced • Cilantro • Roasted red peppers • Vinaigrette • Wine and herbs • Wine sauce • Foods that are blackened, roasted, steamed, poached, grill, marinated or broiled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Au gratin • Bacon or sausage • Casserole • Cheese sauce • Cream sauce • Creamy, mushroom sauce • Drawn butter or butter sauce • Hollandaise • Melted cheese • Pastry shell • Phyllo dough • Foods that are stuffed with bread crumbs

Type of Food	Choose These Foods	Limit These Foods
Italian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artichoke hearts • Capers • Florentine • Herbs and spices • Light red or wine sauce • Mushrooms • Peppers • Primavera • Shallots or onions • Sun-dried tomatoes • Foods that are sautéed or grilled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alfredo sauce • Cannelloni • Pasta alla Carbonara • Creamy sauce • Egg and cheese batter • Manicotti • Oil • Pancetta • Parmigiana • Prosciutto • Saltimbocca • Veal sausage • Foods that are stuffed with cheese or fried
Mexican	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enchilada sauce • Lettuce and tomatoes • Mole sauce • Picante sauce (high sodium in large amounts) • Salsa (high sodium in large amounts) • Soft corn tortillas • Spicy beef or chicken • Foods that are grilled, marinated or simmered • Guacamole (eat in small amounts - high in fat but healthy monounsaturated fat) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bacon • Cheese sauce • Chorizo • Fried taco bowls • Refried beans • Sour cream • Tortilla chips • Foods that are covered with cheese or fried

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

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