

12 Weeks

TO HEALTHY EATING

WEEK EIGHT – EATING OUT: TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Eating out can be an overwhelming experience when you are trying to improve your eating habits. Where do you begin? What information do you have to help you select healthy options? How do I know if I am eating a healthy portion size? Is the nutritional value in restaurants similar to that of foods prepared at home? There are so many questions that might run through your mind when you go out to eat. Others might not wonder or worry at all and select the item that sounds good at that particular time. Some people view eating out as a treat and therefore order something unique. Others find themselves eating out several times per week and will need to focus more on the choices they make to stick to the 80/20 rule.

Learning:

- What to look for
- Ordering
- Portion size
- Tips

1. Set your goal

Are you someone who goes out to eat once a month as treat? If so, you may decide to select whatever item looks good to you at that time (20%) and not worry about items might be the healthier options (80% of the time). Are you someone who goes out to eat once or more per week or someone who wants to learn to select healthier options? If so, you may want to set a goal before you go out to eat and take action prior to leaving the house to assist you in selecting a healthy option. Most people know what the healthy options are on the menu, but you might be surprised if you take a closer look. Set your goal first, then educate yourself and select three to four possible options that would match the goal you set. Remember to include the reasons why this goal is important to you and the barriers you might face while trying to accomplish this goal. How might you overcome these barriers? For example, you plan to skip the bread and appetizers and stick to ½ of an entrée that includes grilled chicken, steamed vegetables and whole grain rice. When you arrive, the individuals you are with order nachos to start and a large bread basket is placed on the table. What might you do?

2. Plan ahead

Decide where and when you are going to dinner ahead of time. This will allow plenty of time for you to formulate a plan of action. Better yet, identify at least five restaurants you go to frequently and research the options ahead of time. Decide if you are going to select a healthy option or if you are going to allow yourself to not focus on selecting a healthy option tonight. If you know you are going out to eat for dinner and want to allow yourself a meal you love, how might you change your eating habits during the day to help you stick to your goal?

3. Educate yourself

It is important to understand that when you go to a restaurant, you expect good tasting food to be served. Fat, salt and sugar add flavour to food; however, these additions will also impact the nutritional content. Chefs often add extra oil or butter to the pans to cook food or add additional oil in sauces and marinades to add flavour and to create moist, tender products. Because of this, the nutritional information online may or may not be completely accurate. Knowing this ahead of time is important to help you select and create healthy options.

Most restaurants now include the nutritional facts document online for all of the products served. Plan ahead by researching the nutritional information and select three to four healthy options you could choose from that would help you stick to your goals. What do you notice on the online information? What will you have to do to achieve your goal? When you look at the menu, what key words do you notice that might help you determine if an option is “healthy” for you?

4. Food preparation

Educate yourself and ask questions about how the food is prepared. Certain cooking methods require less added fat while others might put you over your daily recommendation in one meal. Look for the key words grilled, steamed, baked, boiled, poached, lightly sautéed or broiled. Words like roasted, sautéed, stir-fried, braised, deep fried, breaded, creamed, crispy, rich, pan fried, scalloped, au gratin or in a cheese sauce indicate items cooked with additional calories and fat.

Questions to ask about the food preparation:

- How is the meat prepared? Is there added oil, butter, creams, sauces, etc.? Can I get the sauce on the side? Can I request the meat to be grilled with no additional oil or butter?
- How are the vegetables prepared? Is there added oil or butter? Can I request steamed vegetables with no added oil or butter?
- What are the side options? Soup, salad, French fries, chips, baked potato, cheesy potatoes, mashed potatoes, etc.? What might be the healthier option? Can I substitute the side for additional steamed vegetables or a side salad with dressing on the side?
- What types of grains are included? Can I substitute the white rice for brown rice or the white pasta for whole grain pasta?
- Does the entrée come with bread? Can I decline the bread if whole grains are already included in my meal?

5. Extras

It is important to ask what types of sauces, seasonings, marinades, cheese, croutons and dressings are included in the meal.

- Ask the server to clarify how the meat is prepared and if the sauce or marinade contains a significant amount of added fat, ask for it on the side. Fruit juices like lemon juice, orange juice or lime juice tenderize meat without adding calories.
- Dressings can add a significant amount of calories to salads. Always ask for the dressing on the side. Dip your fork into the dressing before you put the salad on your fork and you will use a significantly smaller amount of dressing but still get the taste in every bite.

- Other suggestions are to use salsa, lime juice, herbs and seasonings for additional flavour! Request a small amount of cheese or cheese on the side to save on added calories and saturated fat.
- Request mayonnaise on the side or replace mayonnaise with Dijon mustard on sandwiches.
- Hold the cheese, bacon, croutons, and tuna-salad, chicken-salad or other meat options loaded with mayonnaise.
- Choose broth-based soups as opposed to cream-based soups.
- Hold the bread basket!
- Hold the appetizer!
- Share a dessert or skip it!

6. Order the way you want it

Ask questions to determine how you can make your meal fit your healthy eating plan. Use the tips above in food preparation and extras to order the meal YOU want. Restaurants should want to cater to the customer to meet his or her every request. Be sure to state exactly what you want to be assured you will be satisfied with your entrée. Individuals with food allergies have to do this each and every time they eat out, so do not think of this as an inconvenience for the restaurant.

7. Portion control

Restaurant portion sizes are often double or triple what we need in a meal. More often than not you can expect to box up half of your meal to stick closer to the recommended portion sizes. Use the household measurements to determine about how much you might be consuming. If you don't feel you can leave half on your plate, as for a box before you begin eating and box half up for lunch tomorrow!

8. Execute your plan of action

Create your plan and stick to it! Do not be swayed by what others are ordering or eating around you. Remember the goal you set before you left to go to the restaurant and remember why it is important to you to stick to your long-term goal.

Self-exploration exercises

How important is making a healthy choice when eating out to you right now?

How do you decide what to order when you are at a restaurant?

What do you notice about portion sizes?

What do you notice about how the food is prepared compared to how you prepare food at home?

Identify five restaurants you like to go to:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Go online and look at the nutritional information. What do you notice? How does this compare to what you expected? Are the options you typically choose healthy choices? Remember to use reliable sources as there are many dubious websites with unqualified and unreliable information.

How does what you discovered change your food choices when eating out?

Identify three to four options at each restaurant that might be healthy choices for you to choose in the future. Write these options down and store somewhere you can refer back to before you eat out. How might you order these items? What might you request differently or substitute? Aim to include hot and cold options.

Want to know more about where restaurants get their food?

There is growing interest from restaurant goers to know where their restaurant food comes from, who produces it and who handles it as it travels from its source to your plate. Now you can find out! New online sites are popping up to provide you with information on the restaurant food you are eating. You can even download a barcode app to obtain real-time information on the food you are about to consume. For example, try looking at www.foodtree.com and have some fun while you gain more insights into what you are eating!

Goal setting: Set SMART goals to work on for the next week

A key point to any successful plan is to complete and review your goals on an ongoing basis. Complete the following goals sheet. Putting pen to paper on what you want and need, your obstacles, challenges and back-up plan is key to long-term positive change.

1. What do you want to do?

2. Why do you want to make this change?

3. How are you going to make this change?

4. When are you going to make this change?

5. How many days per week are you planning on making this change?

6. What barriers might you encounter that might inhibit you from making this change?

7. How might you get past these barriers?

8. What is your back-up plan?

9. Evaluate your confidence and motivation for making these changes on a scale of 1–10.
