

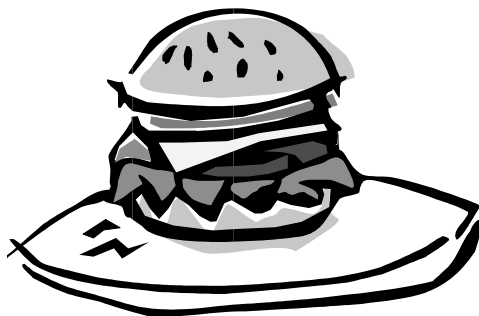
# Serving Up Healthier Fast Foods

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More than 50% of Canadians describe their lives as busy, fast-paced, or out of control. This may explain why Canadians spend more than 1/3 of their food budget on meals prepared away from home and much of this is in fast food restaurants. While fast food meals are quick and easy, they tend to be high in calories, fat and sodium, and low in fibre, vitamins, and minerals. Fast food can fit into a healthy diet if you make sensible choices. Many quick-serve outlets now offer a greater variety of prepared foods, including vegetables and fruits. Here are a few tips to get more nutrition out of your fast food experience, while getting fewer calories and less fat.

## Burgers

- ✓ Choosing smaller sizes is usually better.
- ✓ Don't let the name fool you – prepared chicken and fish can be high in fat. Generally anything deep-fried is higher in fat. Choose a grilled chicken sandwich without mayonnaise or dressing and save fat calories.
- ✓ Try the veggie burger. It tastes similar to a regular hamburger and is often lower in fat and calories. The extra fibre is a bonus.
- ✓ Skip the cheese, mayonnaise, special sauce, sour cream, and bacon if you want to reduce extra fat. Instead, choose flavourful low-fat toppings such as ketchup, barbeque sauce, low-fat dressings, mustard, extra lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and pickles.
- ✓ Save money along with calories and fat by not “super-sizing” your meal. This marketing gimmick is designed to make you spend more money. Eat for your health, not to get the best deal.
- ✓ Have a small burger, small fries, and a low-fat milk instead of a double bacon cheeseburger, super-sized fries, and a large regular pop. Even better, opt for a side salad instead of the fries to boost vitamins, minerals, and fibre.



## Sandwiches, subs, pitas, wraps, and tacos

- ✓ Choose chicken, turkey, ham, or beef as fillings for sandwiches, subs, pitas, or wraps. Creamy fillings, like egg salad or tuna salad, tend to be higher in fat. Have a 6 inch sub instead of a larger size, and ask for the whole grain bun to get extra fibre.
- ✓ Try mustard and low-fat sauces instead of mayonnaise, sub sauces, and cheese.
- ✓ Ask for extra lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, green peppers, or hot pickled peppers to add flavour and nutrients.
- ✓ Order the bean soft taco or burrito instead of a hard beef taco to get more fibre and less fat and calories. Hard taco shells are usually deep-fried and are a source of hidden fat.



## Beverages

- ✓ Juice is a better choice than pop. It is refreshing and is packed with vitamins and minerals.
- ✓ Choose milk instead of a milkshake. A shake is loaded in fat and sugar, whereas milk is a great source of calcium and other nutrients.
- ✓ Limit colas if you want to decrease your caffeine intake. Choose diet pop to save on extra sugar calories.

## Pizza:

- ✓ Try ham or chicken instead of bacon, sausage, ground beef, or pepperoni to make a leaner pizza.
- ✓ Add more vegetables, or try ordering a vegetarian pizza. A typical vegetarian pizza will have less than half the fat of a typical meat lover's pizza.
- ✓ Beware of deep dish or pan pizzas that often have oil added to the pan before cooking. Thinner crusts will have less fat and calories.
- ✓ Ask for your pizza to be made with half the cheese. It will have all the taste but half the fat.
- ✓ Split the slice. A typical slice at most pizza outlets is a generous serving. Ask for it to be cut in half, and share it.



## Side orders

- ✓ Ask for a soup, salad, or baked potato instead of fries when ordering a combo.
- ✓ Try low-fat or fat-free dressings on salads, and always ask for the dressing on the side. By using half the package, you cut the calories and fat in half too. You can dilute thick salad dressings with a packet of vinegar or lemon juice.
- ✓ Choose broth-based soups instead of cream-based ones for a healthy, low-fat side dish.
- ✓ Skip the onion rings! They are high in fat and low in nutrients.
- ✓ Ask for gravy on the side, and not on top of your meal. Dip foods sparingly to control the fat intake.

## Desserts

- ✓ Muffins can be hefty on fat and calories. Plain varieties will have less calories than those studded with chocolate chips and nuts. Opt for small, whole grain or bran varieties, and skip the butter.
- ✓ Frozen low-fat yoghurt is a nutritious option.

- ✓ For taste and fibre, choose fresh fruit salad when available.
- ✓ Hold the individual fruit pies, donuts, and cookies; they offer few nutrients.



## Tips for Eating Out

- ✓ Eat regular meals and snacks. Try not to skip meals or go longer than four hours without eating. If you're starving by the time you order, you're likely to overindulge.
- ✓ Instead of pop, have water, milk, or juice to quench your thirst.
- ✓ Most fast food restaurants have nutrition information available to consumers. Pick up a copy to compare fat and calories between your options, and make lower fat choices. Keep the nutrition information handy so that you're prepared for the next time you order. Make sure you look through these **before** you place your order.
- ✓ You do not have to eat everything you have ordered. Stop eating when you are no longer hungry.
- ✓ Less processed food will contain less sodium. For example, a baked potato or salad will contain very little added salt in comparison to a burger and fries.
- ✓ Keep moderation in mind. Everyone indulges occasionally, but it becomes unhealthy when it becomes a habit.
- ✓ Balance your meal! Add a fruit, side salad, and a glass of milk to your fast food entrée and get closer to meeting recommendations from Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Balance will also provide you with more vitamins and minerals.
- ✓ Remember that vegetables and fruit are the "original" fast foods, so if you're only looking for a quick snack, grab a fruit "to go."
- ✓ Finally, healthy eating includes all foods. If you've missed any of the food groups at your fast food meal, be sure to include them in your other meals and snacks.

