








Preparing for Heart Healthy Dining

Dining out has become a way of life in our culture. While it can be a pleasant social event, you also need to keep your health in mind. Meals out are often loaded with extra calories, fat, and sodium. Here are some tips to help you get ready for dining out:

- **Plan for the day.** When you know you will be dining out, make an extra effort to eat healthy during the day. Save some of your calorie, fat, and sodium budget so you can enjoy your restaurant meal.
- **Choose your restaurant wisely.** Look for restaurants that have a wide variety of foods that can fit into your meal plan. Avoid “all you can eat” restaurants because portions can be hard to control.
- **Plan the meal.** Think of the whole meal instead of each course. For instance, you can skip the appetizer if you know you want a salad.
- **Look for the healthy selections.** Many restaurants identify menu items that are lower in calories, fat, and sodium. Make an effort to choose these meals, but remember you still need to watch your portions.
- **Select foods that are baked, broiled, grilled, roasted, steamed, or stir-fried.** Stay away from deep-fried foods because they add extra fat and calories to your meal.
- **Special order your meal the way you want it.** Most restaurants will change the way a menu item is prepared if you ask. Ask for foods to be cooked without salt or extra fat, such as oil or butter. You can also request to have dressings, sauces, and gravy on the side.

Tips for Healthy Eating When Dining Out

Appetizer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Steer clear of the tempting nibblers before your meal such as bread, crackers, muffins, or tortilla chips.● Choose appetizers that have not been fried.
Soup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Pass up soups made with cream or cheese, and look for broth-based soups. Be careful because most soups served in restaurants are high in sodium.
Salad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Ask for your salad dressing on the side when ordering a salad. Dip the tines of your fork in the dressing before taking a bite. Ask if a low fat dressing is available.● You may also ask for alternatives to salad dressing. Vinegar and lemon or lime wedges can add a flavorful twist.● Choose fewer prepared salads such as potato salad, macaroni salad, or tuna salad. They often are made with high fat foods.
Main Course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Avoid cream sauces, cheese sauces, and gravy to decrease the fat and sodium from your meal.● Restaurant servings are larger than a standard meal. Share your meal with another person or pack half of your meal in a to go box before you begin eating. This will help you avoid eating more than you should.
Dessert 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Desserts can be tricky. Look for desserts that have fresh fruits or low fat ice cream or yogurt.● Share the dessert to split the calories and fat.

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Contact your local VA dietitian for more information.