

## What About Eating Out?

It takes time and effort to change eating habits. Most people can't change overnight. Sometimes, it's best to ease into new habits. With time, you can form new, positive eating patterns that will be just as comfortable as your old ones. You'll find that your new, healthy lifestyle will help you look better, feel better and have a healthier heart!

Going out to eat doesn't mean losing control of your eating plan. Think ahead, make smart choices and you can follow a heart-healthy diet almost anywhere you go!



Study the menu before the server comes. Ask how the food is made. And remember, you don't have to finish everything. Ask for a "to go" box.

### What should I order?

- When choosing a main dish, pick skinless poultry or fish most often. Limit red and processed meats. Select lean and extra-lean cuts if you choose to eat meat. Many restaurants also offer healthy and delicious meat-free meal options.
- Ask the server to make substitutions. Order steamed vegetables instead of french fries.
- Make sure your entrée is broiled, baked, grilled, steamed or poached instead of fried.
- Order vegetable side dishes. Ask that they be prepared without butter and served without sauce (or sauce on the side, so you can control the amount you eat).
- Ask for salad dressing on the side or a lemon wedge to squeeze over your salad instead of dressing.
- Ask for baked, boiled or roasted potatoes (prepared and served without butter and sour cream) instead of fried.
- Order fresh fruit in place of cake, pie or ice cream for dessert.

- Ask about lower-sodium and other healthier menu choices. Many restaurants now have healthy menus or icons to show healthy options.
- When it seems as if everything on the menu is "off limits," see if the chef will make you a fruit or vegetable platter. Most chefs are happy to.

### What should I avoid?

- Ask for soft margarine instead of butter — or allow the natural flavors of the foods to come out without the topping.
- Begin your meal with a salad or broth-based soups like minestrone or gazpacho. Skip the fried appetizers and creamy soups.
- At a salad bar, don't use items high in saturated fat or sodium like cheeses, croutons, bacon bits and creamy salad dressings.
- Take the skin off poultry when it arrives. Remove visible fat from meat if the chef hasn't already done so.

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### What about ethnic restaurants?

- At Asian restaurants, order stir-fried chicken or fish with vegetables. A steamed, broiled or boiled main dish is an even better choice. Instead of fried rice, ask for steamed or brown rice. It's healthier to pass on adding soy sauce to your food. You may wish to avoid MSG (monosodium glutamate) because it's a source of sodium (salt). Check with your server to see if it can be left out if it's being used in food preparation. Stick to simpler dishes with ingredients like vegetables, fruits, poultry, seafood and whole grains. You could be less likely to have an issue.
- At Italian restaurants, choose red marinara sauces over white, creamy alfredo ones. Try a fish dish or meatless pasta instead of an entrée made with sausage or meatballs.
- At Mexican restaurants, ask for low-fat sour cream. Opt for soft corn tortillas instead of flour. Avoid refried beans and limit the amount of cheese. Try salads instead of fried foods. Look for fresh seafood on the menu.



When dining at an Asian restaurant, choose the healthier options of steamed or brown rice rather than fried.

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [heart.org](https://www.heart.org) to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free e-newsletter for heart patients and their families, at [HeartInsight.org](https://www.heartinsight.org).
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at [heart.org/SupportNetwork](https://www.heart.org/SupportNetwork).

### Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

**What can I eat at fast-food restaurants?**

**How can I control the portions?**

### MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit [heart.org/AnswersByHeart](https://www.heart.org/AnswersByHeart) to learn more.