



Nutri-Facts Issue #5

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Greetings all!

Did you know that Americans spend 46 cents of every food dollar on foods and beverages consumed away from home? The percentage of meals and snacks eaten outside the home has increased over the years, a trend that is expected to continue. Unfortunately, studies show that people who eat out tend to consume diets that are less nutritious and higher in fat and calories than individuals who prepare their meals at home. In fact, a recent report from the American Institute for Cancer Research found that 69% of Americans finish their entrees most or all of the time when dining out at table service restaurants. Given the caloric density of some entrees, this can be a concern as excessive intakes of energy can increase one's risk for developing obesity and other chronic diseases.

For agents, I have prepared an information sheet that discusses why people are eating out. The proposed nutritional consequences of adopting this eating behavior are also discussed. In addition, I have prepared two one-page fact sheets that discuss healthful advice for individuals who eat out. The focus of the fact sheet is weight management but really applies to healthful eating in general. Finally, there is a brief news release on healthful tips that consumers can use when eating out.

As always, I welcome suggestions/feedback on Nutri-Facts.

Eat Well!

Prepared by Jenna Anding, PhD, RD, LD, assistant professor and Extension nutrition specialist, 5/2000. Revised March 2004 by Jenna Anding and Anne Newton, Texas A&M University Dietetic Intern.

Agent Information Sheet, Nutri-Facts #5

According to the National Restaurant Association, the average American 8 years of age and older eats 4.2 meals out per week. This translates into more than 1 billion commercially prepared meals per week and more than 53 billion meals per year!

An estimated 46% of our food expenditures is spent on food prepared outside the home, up from 26% in 1970. A number of factors are believed to contribute to the trend in dining out:

- A. An increase in the number of working women
- B. More 2-income households
- C. Higher wages (although this is debatable in some circles)
- D. More fast-food outlets which makes dining fast and inexpensive
- E. Increased advertising by restaurants and food companies

The nutritional consequences of eating out are significant. A recent report from the USDA suggests that foods eaten outside of the home differ nutritionally from foods prepared in the home.

A comparison of the nutrient content of foods prepared at home and away from home per 1,000 calories

Nutrient	Foods Prepared At Home	Foods Eaten Outside the Home
Total Fat (% of calories)	32%	38%
Saturated Fat (% of calories)	11%	12.8%
Cholesterol	122 milligrams	127 milligrams
Dietary Fiber	8.1 grams	6.1 grams
Sodium	1640 milligrams	1807 milligrams
Calcium	425	343
Iron	8.2 milligrams	6.1 milligrams

What the chart demonstrates is that for every 1,000 calories we eat away from home we get approximately 2 grams less fiber, 150 milligrams more sodium, 82 milligrams less calcium, and 2 milligrams less iron in comparison to the foods we prepare at home. Plus, foods prepared at home are lower in total and saturated fat. Calorically, one meal from a table-service restaurant may provide 1,000 to 2,000 calories! For some adults, this is equal to a full day's energy requirement. This is a concern since the American Institute

for Cancer Research has reported that 69% of Americans eat most or all of their entree when dining out at table service restaurants.

Why should we be concerned about the nutritional value of meals eaten out?

Since more than 60% of our adult population is either obese or overweight, and more adults are eating out, it seems logical that relying on others to prepare our meals and snacks could have a serious impact on our waistlines. A recent study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that women now consume an average of 335 calories more per day than they did 30 years ago. Men are consuming approximately 168 more calories. When physical activity is not increased these extra calories can turn into a whopping 35 and 24 pounds of extra weight for women and men, respectively, in one year!

Researchers suspect that eating out may be contributing to the excess intake of energy (and fat). For example, an analysis of data from the Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals found that on the day adults and children consumed fast food, energy, fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol intakes were significantly higher while fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, and calcium intakes were significantly lower compared to the day when fast food was **not** consumed. In another study, McCrory et al. found that individuals who ate restaurant food more than 12.9 times per month had energy intakes that were 31.5% higher than individuals who consumed restaurant food \leq 4.3 times per month. The authors of that study also found that the frequency of restaurant food consumption was associated with greater body fatness.

Why are foods prepared outside the home higher in energy and fat and lower in other important nutrients like calcium, iron, and fiber?

This is a tough question to answer. According to experts there is no reason why foods eaten away from home should differ nutritionally from foods prepared at home. For this to occur, however, there must be a consumer demand that is so great that it provides an economic incentive to restaurants and other food service establishments. At least one study has found that although consumers may want lower-fat food choices, they are not ordering them when offered on the menu.

There are other reasons why foods prepared outside the home are different nutritionally than foods prepared at home. Perhaps people are less willing to sacrifice taste when eating out - especially if the reason for eating out is a special occasion. Perhaps people do not realize that foods eaten away from home have an impact on their overall nutrient and energy intake. It is even possible that consumers don't realize just how much or how often they are eating out. Other potential reasons include a lack of readily available nutrition information about restaurant foods (unlike the *Nutrition Facts* label on food packages) or an inability to prepare nutritious meals at home.

What advice can we give to waist-watching consumers who eat out?

There is no doubt that the reliance on restaurants and fast-food establishments will continue. The key is to educate consumers on how eating out can influence their overall nutrient intake - as well as their waistlines. The attached fact sheets provide some simple tips for consumers who want to watch their calorie and fat intake when eating out.

References:

Biing-Hwan L, Guthrie J, Frazee E. *Nutrient Contribution of Food Away From Home*. USDA/ERS

McCrorry MA, Fuss PJ, Hays NP, Vinken AG, Greenberg AS, Roberts SB. Overeating in America: association between restaurant food consumption and body fatness in healthy adult men and women aged 19 to 80. *Obesity Research*. 1999; 7:564-571.

Paeratakul S, Ferdinand DP, Champagne CM, Ryan DH, Bray GA. Fast-food consumption among US adults and children: Dietary and nutrient intake profile. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. 2003; 103:1332-1338.

Additional web sites for tips on eating out:

American Heart Association:

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=531>

(This link offers tips for eating out at various types of restaurants!)

Nebraska Cooperative Extension: <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/foods/nf499.htm>

American Cancer Society:

http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_3_2x_Restaurant_Eating_Tips_Mar_03.asp?sitearea=PED

Fast Food Finder (find out the nutritional value of your favorite fast foods):

<http://www.olen.com/food/>

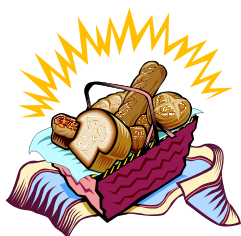
Healthy in a Hurry: Eating Smart at Fast Food Restaurants. South Dakota Dept. of Health
<http://www.state.sd.us/doh/Nutrition/restaurant.pdf>

Watching the Waistline When Eating Out

Americans love to eat out. In fact 46 cents of every food dollar is spent on food that is prepared by someone else. Unfortunately, eating out is a habit that may come at a cost to our nutritional health. While it may be easier to drive to the window of a fast food restaurant or have pizza delivered to our door instead of preparing a meal at home, foods eaten away from home tend to be higher in calories and fat. This creates a challenge for people who are watching their weight. The following tips can help avoid waistline expansion when dining out.

1. Free foods offered at restaurants are not really "free". In fact, a basket of bread sticks or fried corn chips can cost up to 1,000 calories.

The solution? Ask for plain corn tortillas instead of fried chips or request that bread be served without added butter. Better yet, decline the free food altogether.



2. A baked potato is usually better than one that is fried unless butter, sour cream, bacon, and cheese are added. You may get a little more flavor with these toppings but you could also add on an extra 40 grams of fat to an otherwise fat-free baked potato. **The solution?** If you must top



your potato with a little extra "something," get the toppings on the side and use them sparingly.

3. Bigger portions may be cheaper but what kind of value are you really getting? A regular order of French fries has about 350 calories and 17 grams of fat. Upgrading to a larger size for a few cents means nearly 600 calories and 29 grams of fat. Is that really a value? **The solution?** If you eat at a fast food restaurant, just say **NO!** to value-sized portions. If usual restaurant portions are too large for your needs, ask for a child-size portion or ask for another plate and split the entree with a friend.



4. Read menus carefully - don't be afraid to ask for substitutions.

Instead of	Ask for	And you could save as much as..
Pasta with Alfredo sauce	Pasta with Marinara sauce	80 grams of fat & 720 calories
Sauteed vegetables (1 cup)	Steamed vegetables (1 cup)	12 grams of fat & 108 calories
Mayonnaise (1 Tbsp)	Mustard or ketchup (1 Tbsp)	10 grams of fat & 85 calories
Butter hamburger bun	Plain hamburger bun	12 grams of fat & 108 calories
Cheesecake (1 slice)	Sherbet (½ cup)	17 grams of fat & 180 calories



Prepared by Jenna Anding, PhD, RD, assistant professor and Extension nutrition specialist, April 2000. Revised March 2004.

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Eating Healthy in the Fast Food Lane

Fast food restaurants can provide good-tasting meals for people who are in a hurry. Unfortunately, research has shown that people who dine on fast food tend to eat more calories and fat and less fiber, calcium, and vitamins A and C compared to individuals who don't. Is eating nutritiously at a fast food restaurant impossible? Not if you follow the advice below:

1. Read the nutrition information that is available. Many fast food restaurants have the nutritional analysis of their menu items available at the restaurant or on the Internet. This information can help you make nutritious choices.



2. Think small. Bigger is not always better, especially when it comes to burgers and french fries. For many people, regular or kid-sized portions are plenty.



3. Watch out for fried foods. French fries, fish sandwiches and fried chicken may taste great but they are often higher in fat and calories compared to other choices. Instead, choose grilled chicken sandwiches, roast beef or turkey sandwiches instead of hamburgers. A baked potato is usually a healthier choice than fries, if you go easy on the butter, cheese, sour cream and other toppings.



4. Go Green. Many restaurants offer fresh vegetable salads. Salads can be a great source of dietary fiber plus health-promoting antioxidants and phytochemicals. Choose salads with dark green lettuce or spinach, and lots of red, green, and orange vegetables. Use low-fat or fat-free dressings and stay clear of added ingredients like bacon, eggs, and cheese.



5. Pick your beverage wisely. Low-fat milk or water are excellent choices. If you drink soda, order the diet version.



6. Be choosy. Choose restaurants where food is made to order so you can control the ingredients. Don't be afraid to ask for substitutions. Remember you are the one paying! For example:

- * choose mustard over mayo or special sauces;
- * choose a small hamburger and salad instead of fries or chips;
- * request extra vegetables on sandwiches;
- * request hamburger buns without added butter.



News release

Americans love to eat out. In fact, almost 46 cents of every food dollar is spent on food that is commercially prepared. Increases in the number of working women, two-family incomes, and fast-food restaurants are just some of the factors behind this trend. Unfortunately, eating out may come at the cost to our nutritional health. A recent report from the United States Department of Agriculture found that foods prepared outside the home were higher in calories and fat than foods prepared at home.. Some restaurants serve meals that weight in with up to 2,000 calories each. "That is enough energy to fuel some adults for a full day," notes Jenna Anding, PhD, RD, assistant professor and Extension nutrition specialist with Texas Cooperative Extension. "It's okay to treat yourself to a special meal every once in awhile but eating high calorie, high fat meals on a regular basis can lead to unwanted weight gain, especially when physical activity is not increased."

According to Anding, the rise in the number of meals and snacks eaten outside the home is not expected to slow down. So what can a waist-watching consumer do? Many restaurants already offer tasty entrees that are low in fat and calories. These foods are often noted with a special mark on the restaurant's menu. In addition, Anding has some helpful nutrition advice for individuals who frequently eat out:

1. Remember, complimentary chips and bread are not really "free." A basket of these foods can add as many as 1,000 extra calories to the table. If you need a little snack to tide you over until our main meal comes, ask for plain corn tortillas instead of chips or bread without added butter. Another alternative is a lettuce and tomato salad with dressing on the side. Dip your fork in the dressing, then stab your salad. You will still taste the dressing but only get a fraction of the calories.
2. Just say NO! To value-sized portions. For a few cents more, consumers can get a larger portion of fries but that also means more fat and calories. Is that really a value? Stick with smaller size portions.
3. Many restaurants offer portions that could easily feed two or three people. Consider splitting the entree with a friend and ordering extra vegetables or salad. You can also ask for a doggy bag and take part of the entree home for another meal. Some restaurants will even let you order off of a child's menu, even if it is not advertised on the menu. Just ask.
4. Read the menu carefully and don't be timid about requesting substitutions. Choose pasta with marinara sauce over fettuccini Alfredo and you can as many as 800 calories and 80 grams of fat. For hamburgers, ask for mustard or ketchup instead of mayonnaise. Ask for steamed vegetables instead of ones sauteed in butter.

What about dessert? Is that forbidden food at restaurants today? "We can still have our favorite desserts. The key is to plan for them," advises Anding. For example, if you know that you want cheesecake for dessert, choose lower fat, lower calorie foods for the main entree. Also, some restaurants serve dessert portions that feed more than one person. Consider asking for an extra plate and fork and split the treat with a friend. If you have a choice between a cake that is named "Death by Chocolate" and plain ice cream, the ice cream is probably the healthier choice. Other healthful choices for satisfying that sweet tooth include fresh fruit and sherbet.

By making healthful food choices and exercising control with portion sizes, consumers can continue to dine out without risking an expansion of the waistline. To learn more about selecting nutritious foods when eating out, contact _____, County Extension Agent at _____ (phone number).