

# EATING OUT

By Lisa Evans

Whether grabbing lunch on the go or sitting down for a dinner, browsing restaurant menus for healthy options can be overwhelming. Restaurant foods tend to have higher calories and contain more fat and sodium than homemade foods, making sticking to a healthy diet a challenge when eating out. A recent study from the University of Toronto examined the calories, fat and sodium content — which are associated with obesity, heart disease and diabetes — of fast-food and sit-down chain restaurant meals and found average meals contained 1,128 calories (56 per cent of the daily recommended calorie intake of 2,000 calories), 58 grams of fat (89 per cent of the daily recommended value) and 2,269 milligrams of sodium (151 per cent of the daily recommended value).

So, how do you ensure your restaurant meal isn't a heart attack on a plate?

## Review nutritional content

Many restaurants post nutrition information on their websites to allow

customers to compare menu items. Mobile apps such as Restaurant Nutrition allow users to compare nutrition information of various major restaurant chains such as McDonalds, Applebee's and Boston Pizza. Using these tools can help you make a healthier choice before leaving home.



## Look for the Health Check logo

Many major restaurant chains such as Boston Pizza and Swiss Chalet participate in the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Health Check program. These companies voluntarily submit their menu items to be evaluated by the foundation and receive a Health Check logo to place on their menus if the foundation finds these items to meet their nutrient standards for fat, sodium and sugar. Choosing a menu item marked with a health check symbol is an easy way to ensure you're making a healthier choice when eating out.

## Customize your order

Making healthy choices is all about having control over what goes in your food. Eating at fast food chains such as Subway where you can choose sandwich toppings is a great way to make your lunch healthier. Choose whole grain over white bread, skip the mayonnaise and add extra vegetables to increase the nutritional value of your meal. A salad may sound like a healthy choice, but high sodium dressing can spoil your meal.

Ask for dressing on the side to give you control over how much of it goes on your food.

## Pay attention to language

Scan the menu for words such as "pan-fried" and "dipped." These dishes often have a lot of hidden fat and sodium. Opt instead for items labelled "grilled," "steamed" or "baked." 🌿

