

# Eating Out

## Making Healthier Choices When Eating Out

People eat ready-made meals from restaurants and other food vendors for many reasons. This is often for enjoyment and convenience. It can also be an easy and fun way to try new cuisines from around the world.

Ready-made meals are often high in calories, sodium, added and total sugars, total and saturated fats, and are lower in fibre. By eating out often, your health may be negatively affected. It can contribute to a rise in your blood pressure, cholesterol, and weight.



*Photo from Unsplash.com*

You can incorporate some ready-made and take-out meals while also maintaining a healthy and nutritious diet. We will share some “tried and true” ways on how you can make healthier choices when [eating out](#):

1. Limit how often you eat out to a few times per week. It is recommended that you cook most of your foods at home.
2. Eating out can be heavy on your budget and your calorie-budget. Plan eating out ahead of time whenever possible.
3. Choose dishes that have a variety of different vegetables – the more colour the better – and fill half of your plate with them. If your entree does not include many vegetables, order extras as a side dish (e.g., salad, steamed vegetables).
4. Choose whole grains and higher fibre carbohydrate choices as your side dish. Keep portions to about a fist size (or a quarter of your plate). Healthy choices include brown rice, quinoa, sweet potato, whole grain pasta, whole grain bread, and others. Consider ordering a side dish of beans/legumes as an alternative.
5. Choose grilled or steamed fish more often, opt for leaner cuts of meat (e.g., chicken breast, pork tenderloin) and consider vegetarian proteins, such as tofu, tempeh, beans, legumes, and others.

6. Skip the extra sauces, such as mayonnaise and creamy dressings, and opt for vinaigrette-based sauces if possible. Otherwise, ask to have the sauces packed on the side so that you may add them yourself.
7. Keep portions in check. Most take-out meals are significantly larger than portions you would typically eat at home. Ask for an extra container that you can use to portion out a part of your meal and enjoy it on another day (or share with someone else!).
8. Choose unsweetened beverages such as water (plain or carbonated), herbal tea, cow's milk, goat's milk, and/or unsweetened almond or soy beverages. Sugary drinks like soda, juices, chocolate and other flavoured milks and milk alternatives are full of added sugars.
9. Review the menu items of your favorite restaurants ahead of time so that you are better prepared to make your healthy meal choices. In Ontario, restaurants and food-service chains with 20 or more locations have to post the nutritional information for their [menu](#) items.
10. If you have no time to plan your take-out meal ahead of time or are grabbing one on-the-go, make it a one-course meal and skip the sides.



Photo from Unsplash.com

Learn more about healthy tips on eating out by clicking [here](#)

## Reference:

1. <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Dining-Out/Top-10-Tips-for-Eating-Out.aspx>

*This information has been used with permission from Dietitians of Canada. Dietitians are passionate about the power of food and its connection to health.*

*Visit [UnlockFood.ca](https://www.unlockfood.ca) for evidence-based information from dietitians on food, nutrition, healthy eating, disease prevention, award-winning recipes and more. Learn more about how to connect with a dietitian at [unlockfood.ca/find](https://www.unlockfood.ca/find).*

