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## Eating out

### Different Eating Out Events

There was a time when eating out was considered a luxury. Today, it is a part of our daily lifestyle. Americans eat out nearly one out of every four meals and snacks, spending almost half their food budgets on dining out. Eating out is a fact of life that is not likely to change. Yet, eating meals away from home reduces a weight manager's ability to control the type of ingredients or methods used in preparing and serving meals. Meals and snacks eaten away from home typically contain more calories, sodium, and saturated and trans fats than meals eaten at home. How can we cope with the ever-expanding opportunities for eating out and still maintain a healthy weight?

One way is to recognize that all eating out events are not created equal. Virtually any eating out event can be classified into one of two categories: necessity or special occasion.

**Necessity eating out** events are:

Business-related meals, travel-related meals, ward-off-hunger meals, vacation meals, and meals "on the run" (not enough time to plan meals or cook).

**Special occasion eating out** events are:

Celebrations, social events, social dining, and holidays.

The major difference between these two types of eating events is that **necessity eating out** focuses on obtaining fuel and nutrients for your body, i.e., the food is primary and the event or environment is secondary. **Special occasion eating out** is primarily focused on the event (e.g., birthday or anniversary celebrations, holidays). Food can be a major part of these gatherings, but it is secondary to the reason for getting together.

Necessity eating out events will challenge your efforts to manage your weight if they happen frequently. Use your meal planning skills to reduce the numbers of times that you have to eat out simply to provide fuel for your body.

### **tools for success**

- Distinguish between **necessity** and **special occasion** eating out situations and the appropriate strategies for each.
- Select appropriate meals from different types of restaurants.
- Maintain appropriate eating strategies even while traveling.

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### For example:

- The night before work, pack healthy foods to go: yogurt, a piece of fruit, half a peanut butter sandwich, a hard boiled egg, baby carrots, and a meal replacement such as an OPTIFAST® product. Take this with you instead of eating out or stopping by a fast food restaurant.
- “Brown bag it” whenever possible.
- Keep emergency supplies of healthful foods that do not require refrigeration in your office. OPTIFAST products are perfect for this purpose.

Special occasion eating out may occur less frequently but it can be hazardous to your weight management efforts as well. It can make you feel like the rules that normally govern appropriate eating shouldn't apply.

Necessity eating out may be a solo event (e.g., ordering room service while on work-related business, grabbing a meal from a deli while running errands) or it may involve other people (e.g., lunch with coworkers). Special occasion eating out nearly always involves other people. This can make these eating out events particularly risky. Watching other people overeat can make you want to eat more than you regularly would. Also, your dining companions

may actively encourage you to order that special dessert or to have an after-dinner drink. Peer pressure can be extremely difficult to withstand.

While both types of eating out situations have their own unique challenges, they also have similarities:

- The cost of the meal may make you feel that you should eat every last bit, whether you or someone else has already paid for it.
- The assortment of foods available (especially at restaurants) may include some that are high in fat and calories. Thinking about and seeing them may trigger you to want to eat them.
- Going out for meals with friends or family can be stressful. Stress may lead you to order an alcoholic beverage or a rich dessert or nibble on appetizers as a response to feeling anxious.

Neither type of eating out event is “better” or “worse” than the other. It is important to recognize how frequently you participate in necessity and special occasion eating out events so that you can implement plans to effectively cope with your unique eating out style. Use the Eating Out Profile to determine the type and frequency of your eating out events.

## Eating Out Profile

Think about how frequently you eat away from home. Where do you eat? Why? Was it a necessary event (N) or a special occasion (SO)? Fill out the areas below that best reflect your habits, and provide more information if you wish.

Where?	Why? (N or SO)	How Often per week?	Typical Menu of items offered	Healthy Alternatives as mentioned in this module
Fast food restaurant				
Take-out or home delivery				
Restaurant or cafeteria				
Travel				
Party or social gathering				
In the car				
Office desk				
Worksite cafeteria				
Vending machine				
Other				

## Preparing to Eat Out

Regardless of the type of eating out event, you still have to know how to cope with the many factors that contribute to overeating when eating away from home. Take the following three steps before going out to eat:

- Determine where and with whom you will eat.
- Determine what you will eat and the number of calories.
- Determine the specific tactics that you will use at the meal to control your eating.

When eating out, choose a restaurant that supports your weight control efforts. These restaurants are ones that:

- Are familiar to you. If you have patronized them before, you know the menu, the serving sizes, and whether extras, like bread or tortilla chips and sauce, are served. You may also know the staff and feel more comfortable when asking for special requests.
- Offer a varied menu. This should include variety in the types of entrees they serve (poultry, fish, meat, pastas, etc.) and the way entrees are prepared (baked, steamed, broiled, fried, etc.). Going to a restaurant that only serves fried foods means that your meal will inevitably be high in fat.
- Give you the option to order à la carte. This is a great way to cut out the extras and allows you to build your own meal the way you want it.
- Lets you linger over a meal, so that you can eat slowly, absorb the relaxed atmosphere, and enjoy the company.
- Feature menus rather than buffet tables. Restaurants that specialize in all you can eat specials or buffets are challenging for many people. Despite good intentions, your resolve may fade quickly when facing the wide variety of foods offered at buffets. Research studies have repeatedly shown that people eat more

when allowed to eat a variety of good tasting foods. In addition, buffets can sometimes turn into eating contests to determine who can “get the most for their money.”

- Will prepare food to order. A flexible chef who will prepare meals without excess butter, cheese, or cream can help you stay within your calorie allowance.



After you have determined where you are going to eat, think about the people with whom you will be eating. Consider beforehand which dining partners will support your weight control efforts, and which partners will encourage you to overeat. If possible, sit next to someone whom you know will eat moderately. Eat at a leisurely pace, either by matching your pace with that of a slow eater, or by putting your fork down between bites. In addition, rehearse how you will resist pressures to have a drink, a dessert, or other food that you hadn't planned on eating.

When you go out to eat, particularly for special occasions, it is tempting to think that the calorie meter can be turned off for the night. Unfortunately, your body always counts calories regardless of the occasion. These planning steps will help you budget your calories:

- Decide what you want to eat before going out to dinner.
- Call the restaurant in advance or review their menu online to determine if the foods you desire are available and the portions in which they are served. Ask if they will accommodate special requests.
- Estimate the approximate number of calories in the meal you want to eat. Compare the calories in your meal to the calories you normally allow yourself for that meal. If they are the same, no problem. However, if your desired meal has substantially more calories,

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try to make it more appropriate by:

- Eliminating some of the desired foods or planning to eat them in smaller quantities.
- “Banking” some of your calories by slightly cutting your calorie intake for a few days before eating out so you have some calories “saved” for your special meal. Be careful not to “starve” yourself, though. Arriving at a restaurant famished reduces the ability to eat appropriately.
- Increasing your physical activity for a few days before and after the event to save some calories.
- Determine before leaving for the restaurant if you have made an honest effort to plan to eat appropriately. In particular, make sure that you do not have a hidden over-eating plan (a plan to eat whatever you desire and then rationalize that your overeating was due to a loss of control.)

These suggestions may seem overly cautious, but it’s important to keep calories in mind when planning to eat out. Otherwise, it’s too easy to consume a meal containing thousands of calories.

One way to eat sensibly when eating out is to concentrate on the many non-food pleasures involved, including:

- Not having to cook
- Not having to wash dishes
- Relaxed conversation
- Time away from the kids
- Enjoyable atmosphere

In many cases, these factors are more important and satisfying than the food. Remember them when the bill comes: you have received much more than just food for your money.

## Choosing Foods when Eating Out

Here are a number of specific “tactics” that will help you control your calorie intake while eating out:

**Drink water** – Ask for water at the waiter’s first arrival and keep the glass full throughout the meal. Limit your alcohol intake. Alcohol adds unnecessary calories and weakens your ability to make healthy choices. Sip water, diet soda, club soda, mineral water, or ice tea. If you choose to order a drink, a wine spritzer or a light beer are your best choices.

**Limit bread consumption** – Depending on your meal plan, skip the bread or, after selecting one piece, ask that the bread be removed. If others want to keep the bread on the table, ask them to keep the basket at the other end of the table. Learn to enjoy bread without butter or margarine to reduce the fat and calories.

**Watch out for high fat appetizers** – They often contain more fat and calories than many entrees. High-fat appetizers include potato skins, onion rings, nachos, cream soups, and fried cheese or

vegetables. Instead, enjoy broth-based soups, a shrimp cocktail, and salads with the dressing ordered on the side. Starting your meal with a broth-based soup or low-fat salad may help you lower the calories consumed at that meal.

**Ask questions** – Feel free to ask the waiter questions about the menu and how foods are prepared.

**Avoid sauces and condiments** – Don’t let the chef defeat your weight control efforts by smothering low-calorie entrees (such as chicken or fish) in heavy cream or cheese sauces that may contain more calories than the protein servings they hide. Watch out for salad dressing, mayonnaise, and other condiments like bacon bits, avocado, and cheese. They can add several hundred calories to your meal. Most vegetables are naturally low in calories; ask for them to be steamed or cooked without oil or butter.

## Create A Healthy Salad

### Instructions

As a group, decide on the items to include in a healthy salad with 350 to 400 calories. Choose food items and amounts in each group from groupings on next page or add your own.

Category	Item	Amount	Calories
Greens/ Vegetables/ Fruits			
Salads			
Condiments			
Protein Group			
Dressings			

## Food Choices & Their Caloric Values

Greens/Vegetables/Fruits	Calories/ serving
Lettuces	7/cup
Spinach	13/cup
Broccoli	50/cup
Cauliflower	54/cup
Green peppers	32/cup
Tomatoes	44/cup
Cucumbers	16/cup
Mushrooms	30/cup
Canned fruit salad	152/cup
Fresh melon	72/cup
Canned peaches	156/cup
Fresh pineapple	70/cup

### Pre-prepared Salads

Potato salad	124/½ cup
Macaroni salad	167/½ cup
Cole slaw	126/½ cup
Pasta salad (pasta, Italian dressing, ham, veggies)	147/½ cup
Jello salad	80/½ cup
Bean salad (kidney, green, and yellow beans) with marinade	62/½ cup

### Proteins

Low fat cottage cheese	55/¼ cup
Shredded cheddar cheese	100/4 tbsp.
Whole egg	75/1 egg
Diced ham	55/3 tbsp.
Shrimp	55/2 oz.
Herring (pickled, plain)	55/1 oz.
Tuna (water packed)	55/¼ cup
Grilled chicken	55/1 oz

Condiments	Calories/ serving
Grated parmesan cheese	23/tbsp.
Sunflower seeds	50/tbsp.
Croutons	35/tbsp.
Chinese noodles	75/¼ cup
Raisins	29/tbsp.
Sesame seeds	52/tbsp.
Olives (black)	90/5 olives
Bacon bits	27/tbsp.

### Dressings

Italian	70/tbsp.
Russian	60/tbsp.
Bleu cheese	80/tbsp.
Ranch	70/tbsp.
French	70/tbsp.
Oil and vinegar	60/tbsp.
Lemon juice	2/tbsp.
Low-calorie Italian (no oil)	6/tbsp.
Low-calorie Ranch	40/tbsp.
Salsa	10/tbsp.

Choose foods in their simplest forms – Skinless chicken breast is a better choice than chicken salad. Likewise, broiled fish fillet is a lower fat alternative than stuffed fish.

**Be the first to order** – Order before the others, whether it's the main course or dessert. This way, you won't be influenced by their choices. If you know what you want to eat before arriving at the restaurant, you won't bother to look at the menu.

**Decline extra food** – Order the foods that you really want and skip the side dishes.

**Eat a salad** – But watch out for the dressing. Ask for dressing on the side. Many restaurants offer reduced calorie dressings. You can also use balsamic vinegar, salsa, or lemon juice as alternatives.

**Pace your eating**

– Concentrate on eating your meal slowly and enjoying every mouthful. Pace your eating with that of a slow eater, or put your fork down between bites. These techniques will help you eat less. Leisurely dining will also help you discern when you are getting full.

**Stop eating when you *begin* to feel full** – Remember, it takes 20 minutes for your stomach to send signals to your brain that you are full. You can pack in a lot of excess calories in 20 minutes! Many successful weight managers report that rather than avoid favorite but fattening foods, they stop eating when they are still a tiny bit hungry. Portion control helps keep their calorie intake in check. To give your brain a chance to catch up with your stomach, eat slowly and stop early. Place your napkin on top of your plate when you are finished as a signal to yourself (and the waiter) that you are finished with your meal.

**Use appropriate portion sizes** – Order a take-home container with your meal. When your food arrives,

portion off half the meal into the container before you start eating. Or, split an entrée with a dining partner; this assures better portion control!

**Share a dessert** – Dessert and coffee/tea are a nice conclusion to any meal. Sharing a dessert with a friend saves you half the calories. Or ask for only a half portion. Fresh fruit or sorbet are excellent dessert choices.

**Be mindful of coffee shops and juice bars** – Although their offerings often seem like safe and perhaps even healthful choices for weight conscious consumers, they often hide a surprising amount of fat and calories. Coffee bar drinks such as a large café mocha can conceal as much as 400 calories worth of fat-laden whipped cream and chocolate sauce. Cappuccinos and café lattes made with whole milk or cream are another source of hidden calories. Tea-based drinks such as tazzis and chais are no more slimming.

Your best bet if you need a caffeine boost is a plain cup of coffee or tea. If you need to curb your appetite, ask for a café latte (equal parts coffee and milk) made with skim milk. Avoid bottled and restaurant iced coffee drinks like frappuccinos. They may be low in fat but they are packed with sugar and can contain over 200 calories in a 10-ounce serving. Look for sugar-free syrups to add additional flavor to

plain coffee.

What could be healthier than a variety of fruits or vegetables blended with yogurt and ice? If you drink only 8-12 ounces, a smoothie can make a good mini-meal or snack. However, at 24 ounces and roughly 440 calories, the average smoothie supplies enough food and calories for four people. If you choose a specialty flavor like chocolate or peanut butter, it can run to over 600 calories. Unless you find someone to share a smoothie with, or a small serving option is available, you would be better off choosing 8 ounces of fat-free frozen yogurt topped with fresh fruit. This will supply 200-250 calories.

## coffee, tea or smoothie?

Keep it simple. Plain coffee for a caffeine boost. Iced tea made from real tea bags or fruit blended in frozen yogurt will keep you faithful to your goals at snacktime.