

Restaurant Problems

Eating healthfully when dining out is an age-old topic that comes up again and again in health and wellness courses. Here are some of the top suggestions for dining out healthfully, as delivered by my latest weight management class.

- Don't go!
- Always eat something, either before you go or before your entrée. It can be a little salad or a handful of celery sticks, but make sure it's *something*.
- Share. Give part of your meal to someone else.
- Ask for substitutions, like vegetables to replace fries, cole slaw, or chips.
- Ask for a doggie-bag immediately.

The “doggie-bag” idea was their #1 recommendation.

To follow it, cut your entrée in half and put half in the take-out box before you eat anything. This really reduces the portion sizes (you'll be amazed at how big it is once you get home) and also allows you to enjoy this meal a second (or possibly third) time. They say if you wait until you're done eating, or just estimate where the half lies as you eat, you'll end up nibbling away and eating more than you intended.

The first response, “don't go,” may seem extreme, but it may also be the smartest move of all.

Eating away from home -- be it a fast food breakfast or lunch, a quick pizza on a Friday night or that fancy date on Saturday -- has become a way of life for many people. Now



it's estimated that half of all adults dine out at least once every day. That's a lot of food... and I won't even talk about the effect this can have on the food budget.

Restaurant meals tend to be larger and higher in calories, fat, saturated fat, and sodium than we need. Also, it's hard to get fruits and vegetables in restaurant meals (French fries don't count!). Low-fat or non-fat dairy products are almost nonexistent at restaurants too.

I'm not saying to never ever eat out again. But, even the most dedicated healthful eater can have problems in restaurants. You have much more control when eating at home.

Maybe the idea is to eat out less, pack your lunch more often, and plan ahead a little.

By Cheryle Jones Syracuse, MS, Professor Emeritus at The Ohio State University

BROUGHT TO YOU BY: