

health smarts

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Healthy Dining Out

Going out to eat is a fun experience, but it can be a frustrating challenge if you're trying to lose weight or want to eat healthier.

How can you keep to a diet or make smart nutritional choices when you're bombarded with high-fat, high-sugar and processed foods that seem to be your only option?

As tough as it may seem, there are ways to have a good time eating out and still maintain your diet. These tips will make your dining experience just as healthful as it is enjoyable.

Sit-Down Restaurants

Don't Go Out Hungry

If you're starving and about to go out to a restaurant, it's going to be much harder to make healthy food choices as you'll naturally gravitate to high-calorie meals such as pizza and burgers.

Try to drink some water or have a small snack before you go out so you won't want to devour the whole menu when you get there.

Eliminate Temptations

Many restaurants provide lovely fresh bread to the table, but ask them to refrain from bringing it. This will help avoid unnecessary calories that only serve to put on excess pounds.

Ask For Recommendations

Remember, you're the customer and you can ask for specific changes to your meal to make it healthier. Ask for salad dressings or sauces to be on the side so you can either avoid them altogether or help monitor the amount you use.

Go Grilled Or Baked

Deep-fried foods contain trans-fats that don't provide any nutritional benefit. Grilled and baked foods pre-

serve nutrient content and are a much healthier option.

Have Water

If you have a glass of wine or beer, make sure for every sip you also have a sip of water. Or, after your alcoholic beverage, make sure to drink a full glass of water before ordering your next drink.



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Water helps you feel full and satisfies your thirst, which in turn can potentially help reduce the amount of food you eat during your meal and the amount of alcoholic drinks you consume.

Order The Right Sides

When making your choice of a side dish, stay away from the mashed potatoes, fries, rice and pasta and go for vegetables and salads.

If you have the option of two sides, ask for two servings of vegetables as opposed to vegetables and fries. Veg-

etables are high in fiber so they'll fill you up and help you feel satisfied.

Eat Slowly

Sometimes, we eat too fast and our body doesn't have enough time to send a signal to our brain to say it has had enough.

If you chew your food slowly and take your time you'll be able to recognize that you're full and don't need to eat more. This is especially important for after the meal when the dessert menu comes around.

You might be surprised that you're full and probably don't need a dessert.

Leave Food On Your Plate

Some restaurant portion sizes are huge and well above what a single person needs for that meal.

This is even more so with people who have spinal-cord injury or disease as they have lower basal metabolic rates, altered body composition and reduced physical activity levels that result in requiring less calories than their able-bodied counterparts.

Don't be afraid to leave food on your plate.

Fast Food Restaurants

Eating healthy at a fast food place is where things get trickier. Your standard burger or pizza establishment is often very limited in healthful food options.

Once again, though, there are some things you can do to eat healthy even with fast food.

Drink Water

Just like in a sit-down restaurant, water is the way to go. Order water instead of pop, iced tea or juice. There are no calories in water and given the high probability of a high-

calorie meal, this is one way you can help reduce your caloric intake.

Go Greek

There's a lot of research that supports a Mediterranean-based diet as a healthy option. This diet contains a lot of vegetables, good oils and fats and whole foods.

Choosing a Greek type take-out establishment is a great way to make a healthy choice.

Never Supersize

Eating at burger or pizza establishments that serve fries and other high-calorie and processed foods means you really need to control portion sizes. So, never supersize a meal

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and always try to order the minimal amount needed.

Look For Healthful Options

Some fast food establishments are trying to provide more healthful options, so make sure to look for them on the menu. Wherever possible, order a salad or chili, as opposed to a burger and fries.

For more information, visit eatwelllivewellwithsci.com.

Kylie James, CNP, and Joanne Smith, CNP, are co-authors of the Paralyzed Veterans of America-supported book Eat Well, Live Well with Spinal Cord Injury. ■

An advertisement for IZ Adaptive. It features a photograph of three people (two women and one man) sitting around a dark, round table in a restaurant or cafe setting. They are smiling and holding glasses of water. In the top left corner of the image is the IZ Adaptive logo, which consists of the letters 'iz' in white on a black square background, with the text 'IZ Adaptive' below it. At the bottom of the image, the text 'Sit in Style | izadaptive.com | 1-866-831-0451' is displayed in white.