

# eating out & diabetes

For most people, eating away from home is one of life's pleasures and having diabetes need not deprive you of this enjoyable experience. If you dine out now and again, the occasional splurge won't hurt. If however you eat out regularly, you will need to pay close attention to food choices and serving sizes to manage your weight and diabetes.

## Meals to choose

Try to choose meals that:

- > Are lower in fat and particularly low in saturated fat.
- > Contain breads, cereals (preferably wholegrain), vegetables (including legumes) and/or fruits.
- > Have a moderate amount of added sugar.

## Insulin and eating out

- When eating out, your meal may be served later than usual. To avoid 'hypos', take your insulin with you and give your injection as the meal arrives.
- Be sure to choose a meal with enough carbohydrate. Ask for extra bread, rice, potato, fruit or fruit juice if you need more.
- If you are having a bigger meal with more carbohydrate than usual, you may wish to increase your insulin dose prior to the meal on that special occasion. Discuss this with your doctor or diabetes educator if you are not confident about doing this by yourself.

## What to drink

- Ask for a jug of iced water to quench your thirst before ordering other drinks.
- Water: plain, mineral or soda.
- Low joule/calorie soft drinks.
- Coffee, tea, herbal tea.
- Don't drink fruit juice.
- Alcohol: Limit to 2 standard drinks a day for men and 1 standard drink a day for women\*, and try to include alcohol-free days each week (for more information refer to the *Alcohol & Diabetes* information sheet).

\* NHMRC, Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults (2003).

**There is no need to limit the enjoyment of eating out by thinking you have to go to a special restaurant just because you have diabetes. You'll soon discover that many restaurants serve foods that are suitable for healthy eating.**



# eating out & diabetes

---

## Dining at a friend's house

This can sometimes be a difficult situation as food choices are usually beyond your control. Don't worry – the occasional special meal out shouldn't affect your overall control.

Don't be afraid to ask for a carbohydrate-containing snack such as a bread roll, crackers or fruit juice if you have had your insulin and the meal is delayed.

## Dining at a restaurant

Many restaurants serve food that easily fits into a healthy eating plan. Most also value your patronage and are more than happy to help if you can't find something suitable on the menu. So, feel comfortable in asking restaurant staff about the dish of your choice and the way it's been cooked if you're unsure, and to request simple changes if required.

Listed below are ideas for making healthier food choices in different types of restaurants including takeaway. And one more tip to remember when eating out:

- Try to choose lower salt foods and don't add extra salt at the table.

## Restaurant ideas

### Tips for healthier food choices:

---

- Italian**
- > Choose minestrone/vegetable soup rather than creamy soups.
  - > Choose grilled fish or other seafood.
  - > Choose pasta with tomato or vegetable based sauces.
  - > Choose lean meat or chicken.
- 

- Greek**
- > Choose yoghurt or bean based dips.
  - > Choose grilled marinated meat on skewers or in Lebanese bread with salad.
  - > Choose felafel, kibbi, tabouleh and bean salad.
- 

- Mexican**
- > Choose tostadas, enchiladas, burritos or tacos.
  - > Choose less meat and more beans.
  - > Ask for less cheese, sour cream and guacamole.
  - > Ask for extra salad as a filling or side dish.
- 

“ most restaurants value your patronage  
feel free to ask how it's been cooked a

- 
- Indian**
- > Choose oven baked samosa, lean meat/chicken/fish in curry sauces, herbs, spices or tandoori.
  - > Choose curried vegetables, steamed rice, naan, chapati, roti.
  - > Limit curries based on cream/coconut milk/coconut cream, rice pilau, poori (deep fried flatbread).
- 
- Asian**  
(Chinese,  
Thai,  
Malaysian)
- > Choose noodle/vegetable soups.
  - > Try steamed entrees instead of fried.
  - > Choose steamed rice or noodles.
  - > Limit dishes containing coconut cream/milk.
  - > Choose steamed, braised, curried or barbecued seafood/lean meat/skinless poultry.
  - > Limit deep fried or battered dishes.
  - > Fill your plate with rice/noodles and vegetables, and use the meat/fish/poultry as the flavouring.
- 
- Other tips**
- > Ask for an entrée size meal as a main dish.
  - > Choose clear soups, consommés or light vegetable soups rather than cream soups.
  - > Limit dishes described as au gratin, creamed, battered, crispy, pan fried.
  - > Try a crusty roll without butter or margarine.
  - > Request sauces or dressings to be served separately, so you can control the amount you use.
  - > Order extra steamed vegetables without butter, or a salad without dressing to help fill you up.
  - > Share a dessert or ask for a small serving.
  - > Have fresh fruit salad or sorbet instead of rich desserts.
  - > Beware of extras eg: butter with bread, chips with meal, chocolates and cream with coffee.
  - > If the meal is low in carbohydrate, it's usually easy to ask for some extra bread.
  - > Choose salads based on rice, pasta, potato or beans for additional carbohydrate.
  - > If choosing from a smorgasbord, try not to overeat. First start with three or four choices, and then go back if you are still hungry.
  - > Eat slowly and talk a lot!
-

# eating out & diabetes

## Takeaway ideas

- 
- Hamburgers** > Ask for extra salad.  
> Request a wholegrain or wholemeal roll.  
> Ask for no butter, margarine or mayonnaise on the roll.  
> Choose meat, cheese or egg (not all three).  
> Choose a lean meat, chicken or fish patty.
- 
- Pizza** > Ask for a thin and crispy base instead of a thick pan fried pizza base.  
> Choose low fat toppings like mushrooms, pineapple, capsicum, onion, eggplant, tomato and seafood.  
> Limit high fat toppings like extra cheese, salami and peperoni.
- 
- Chicken** > Choose barbecued chicken rather than crumbed or fried chicken.  
> Remove the skin and limit the gravy.  
> Have salads, bread rolls, mashed potatoes, corn or peas instead of chips.
- 
- Fish & chips** > Ask for fish to be grilled if possible.  
> Choose thick / straight cut chips or wedges instead of French fries and ask for a small serve.
- 
- Stuffed potatoes** > Ask for toppings of salad, baked beans, creamed corn, tuna/salmon, low fat cheese like cottage or ricotta.  
> Limit high fat toppings like regular cheese, sour cream, ham, bacon, butter or margarine.  
> Eat the skin for extra fibre.
- 
- Sandwiches** > Ask for wholegrain bread with less or no butter/margarine.  
(fresh or > Include salad.  
toasted) > Choose low fat fillings like baked beans, low fat hard cheese, cottage/ricotta cheese, lean ham/turkey/chicken, hommos, tuna or salmon.
- 

### Would you like to join Australia's leading diabetes organisation?

- > Dietary services
- > Educational literature
- > Free magazines
- > Product discounts
- > Children's services
- > Support groups

For more information phone **1300 136 588** or visit your State/Territory Organisation's website:

<b>ACT</b>	<a href="http://www.diabetes-act.com.au">www.diabetes-act.com.au</a>	<b>NSW</b>	<a href="http://www.diabetesnsw.com.au">www.diabetesnsw.com.au</a>
<b>NT</b>	<a href="http://www.healthylivingnt.org.au">www.healthylivingnt.org.au</a>	<b>QLD</b>	<a href="http://www.diabetesqld.org.au">www.diabetesqld.org.au</a>
<b>SA</b>	<a href="http://www.diabetessa.com.au">www.diabetessa.com.au</a>	<b>TAS</b>	<a href="http://www.diabetestas.com.au">www.diabetestas.com.au</a>
<b>VIC</b>	<a href="http://www.diabetesvic.org.au">www.diabetesvic.org.au</a>	<b>WA</b>	<a href="http://www.diabeteswa.com.au">www.diabeteswa.com.au</a>

The design, content and production of this diabetes information sheet has been undertaken by the eight State and Territory member organisations of Diabetes Australia Ltd listed below:

- > Diabetes Australia – NSW
- > Diabetes Australia – Queensland
- > Diabetes ACT
- > Diabetes SA
- > Diabetes WA
- > Healthy Living NT
- > Diabetes Australia – Victoria
- > Diabetes Australia – Tasmania

The original medical and educational content of this information sheet has been reviewed by the Health Care and Education Committee of Diabetes Australia Ltd. Photocopying this publication in its original form is permitted for educational purposes only. Reproduction in any other form by third parties is prohibited. For any matters relating to this information sheet, please contact National Publications at [dapubs@tpg.com.au](mailto:dapubs@tpg.com.au) or phone 02 9527 1951.