

FREE
WINTER 2017

Western Pennsylvania **Guide to Good Health**

Tips for Eating Healthy When Eating Out

A Nutritionist Can Help You Achieve Your Wellness Goals

Want A Memory Boost? Try A Hearing Test

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St. Clair Hospital Initiative Encourages Everyone to Get An Advance Directive

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Guide to Healthy Eats

Tips for Eating Healthy When Dining Out

By Kevin Brown

Eating healthy and dining out didn't always go together, but as more people adopt healthier lifestyles, enjoying a healthy restaurant meal is easier than you might think.

Whether you are watching what you eat to lose weight, lower your cholesterol or just for good health, here are few tips to help you stay on track when dining out.

▶ EDUCATE YOURSELF:

Learning how to make healthy food choices – what foods to eat and not to eat – is the first step to a healthier diet. There are plenty of resources to help you plan a healthy diet. An excellent place to start is your primary care physician who can refer you to a registered dietitian. A consultation with a registered dietitian will provide you with an appropriate diet and meal plans. Some insurance plans may cover these physician-referred nutrition consultations, but check with your insurance plan first.

▶ **PLAN AHEAD.** When planning to dine out, research local restaurants to see which ones offer healthier choices. Many restaurants recognize the value of offering healthier meal choices. Some even mark items on their menus as “heart-healthy” or another designation.

Live Well Allegheny, Allegheny County's health and wellness initiative, identified 32 local restaurants designated as “Live Well Restaurants” to date.

The Live Well Restaurant program (www.livewellallegheny.com) was launched about a year ago and includes restaurants that have committed to offering healthier choices on their menus as well as creating a healthier place to enjoy your meal such as a smoke-free environment.

Hannah E. Hardy, program manager for the Allegheny County Health Department's Chronic Disease Prevention Program that manages Live Well Allegheny, said, “We want to offer Allegheny County residents the opportunity to make healthier choices when dining out.”

In order to receive the Live Well Restaurant designation, a restaurant must commit to eliminating trans-fat oils, become smoke free, not sell tobacco products, and commit to at least four action steps among those suggested by the Live Well restaurant program.

“We are seeing greater demand from consumers for healthier dining options and we want to encourage restaurants to offer healthy choices to their customers,” Ms. Hardy said.

Once you have selected a restaurant, visit their website to check the menu for nutritional information. According to Kelly Danis, RD, LDN, a registered dietitian and director of clinical nutrition for UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside, many restaurants post nutritional information on their menus.

“Research shows that people tend to choose lower calorie and lower fat options when they have nutritional information available to them,” she said.

▶ **ORDER CAREFULLY.** When reviewing the menu, watch for key words that will tell you whether you are making healthy choices. Ms. Danis recommends paying attention to words such as “breaded, fried, creamed, braised, pan-fried, or rich,” which suggest the cooking method may not be as healthy as items described as “steamed, broiled, baked, roasted or poached.”

Watch the portion size. Many restaurants serve large portions which are seen as more value for the money.

“The typical serving of protein should be the size of the palm of the hand. We don't often see that in the traditional restaurant where portion sizes are larger,” Ms. Danis said.

Substitution is a great method for controlling the intake of less healthy foods.

“Skip the fries in favor of more vegetables,” suggests Melisa Fabyonic, RD, LDN, a clinical dietitian at Canonsburg Hospital.

“When ordering salads and baked potatoes, ask for the dressing and sour cream or butter to be served on the side,” she also recommends.

It's not necessary to shy away from favorite foods such as pasta as long as you skip the creamy sauces in favor of marinara sauces.

“It's not the pasta that's the problem,” Ms. Fabyonic said. “It's what you put on it.”



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▶ **EAT SLOWLY.** The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (www.eatright.org) recommends that you eat slowly since it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get the message from your stomach that you are full. Fast eaters tend to overeat while slow eaters eat less and are satisfied.

▶ **TAKE IT HOME.** Don't forget the doggy bag. It's okay to take home what you can't eat. And, you may have enough for a healthy snack or lunch the next day.

With a little education, planning and attention to menu details, you can dine out and eat healthy.



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