

Healthier Fast Food Options

Healthier fast food at burger chains



Figuring out healthier options at your favorite fast food burger chain can be tricky. A typical meal at a burger joint consists of a "sandwich", some fries and a drink, which can quickly come in at over 1700 calories for something like Burger King's Triple Whopper with a large fries and a 16 oz. soda. A better option would be a regular single patty burger, small fries, and water, which is about 500 calories. Alternatively you may enjoy a veggie burger smothered in grilled onion and mushrooms. Or if you want a large beef burger, then skip the fries and soda and have a side salad and water instead.

The Big Burger Chains

Less Healthy choices

1. Double-patty hamburger with cheese, mayo, special sauce, and bacon
2. Fried chicken sandwich
3. Fried fish sandwich
4. Salad with toppings such as bacon, cheese, and ranch dressing
5. Breakfast burrito with steak
6. French fries
7. Milkshake
8. Chicken "nuggets" or tenders
9. Adding cheese, extra mayo, and special sauces

Healthier choices

1. Regular, single-patty hamburger without mayo or cheese
2. Grilled chicken sandwich
3. Veggie burger
4. Garden salad with grilled chicken and low-fat dressing
5. Egg on a muffin
6. Baked potato or a side salad
7. Yogurt parfait
8. Grilled chicken strips
9. Limiting cheese, mayo, and special sauces

Healthier fast food at fried chicken chains



Although certain chains have been advertising "no trans fats" in their food, the fact is that fried chicken can pack quite a fattening punch. According to the restaurant's nutrition info, just a single Extra Crispy Chicken breast at KFC has a whopping 440 calories, 27 grams of fat, and 970 mg of sodium. A healthier choice is the drumstick, which has 160 calories, 10 grams of fat, and 370 mg of sodium. Alternatively, if you like the breast meat, take off the skin and it becomes a healthy choice at 140 calories, 2 grams of fat, and 520 mg of sodium.

Some tips for making smarter choices at fast food chicken restaurants:

The Big Fried Chicken Chains

Less healthy choices

1. Fried chicken, original or extra-crispy.
2. Teriyaki wings or popcorn chicken
3. Caesar salad
4. Chicken and biscuit "bowl"
5. Adding extra gravy and sauces

Healthier choices

1. Skinless chicken breast without breading
2. Honey BBQ chicken sandwich
3. Garden salad
4. Mashed potatoes
5. Limiting gravy and sauces

Healthy fast food: Mexican chains



Fast food chains that specialize in tacos or burritos can be caloric minefields or they can be a good option for finding healthy fast food. Rice, beans, salsa and a few slices of fresh avocado can make a very healthy meal. But adding cheese, sour cream and tortilla chips can turn even a good meal unhealthy. Be sure to also remember portion control since these types of restaurants can have enormous menu items (eat half and take the rest for another meal).

Several chains, like Taco Bell and Baja Fresh, have “healthy” menu options that feature less fat and fresher ingredients.

The Big Taco Chains

Less healthy choices

1. Crispy shell chicken taco
2. Refried beans
3. Steak Chalupa
4. Crunch wraps or gordita-type burritos
5. Nachos with refried beans
6. Adding sour cream or cheese

Healthier choices

1. Grilled chicken soft taco
2. Black beans
3. Shrimp ensalada
4. Grilled “fresco” style steak burrito
5. Veggie and bean burrito
6. Limiting sour cream or cheese

Healthy fast food: Sub sandwich chains



Americans love all types of sandwiches: hot, cold, wrapped, foot long. Usually eaten with a salad instead of fries. The ads promote the health benefits of sandwich shops. Easier said than done... studies have found that many people tend to eat more calories per meal at a sub shop than at McDonalds. This may be because people feel so virtuous eating “healthy” like the ads promise, that they reward themselves with chips, sodas, or extra condiments.

You can make healthier choices at a deli or sub shop but you need to use some common sense.

Subs, Sandwich and Deli Choices

Less healthy choices

1. Foot-long sub
2. High-fat meat such as ham, tuna salad, bacon, meatballs, or steak
3. The “normal” amount of higher-fat (Cheddar, American) cheese
4. Adding mayo and special sauces
5. Keeping the sub “as is” with all toppings
6. Choosing white bread or “wraps” which are often higher in fat than normal bread

Healthier choices

1. Six-inch sub
2. Lean meat (roast beef, chicken breast, lean ham) or veggies
3. One or two slices of lower-fat cheese (Swiss or mozzarella)
4. Adding low-fat dressing or mustard instead of mayo
5. Adding extra veggie toppings
6. Choosing whole-grain bread or taking the top slice off your sub and eating it open-faced

Healthy Asian food



Asian cultures tend to eat very healthfully, with an emphasis on veggies, and with meat used as a “condiment” rather than being the focus of the meal. Unfortunately, Americanized versions of these ethnic foods tend to be much higher in fat and calories – so caution is needed. But here’s a great tip for all Asian restaurants – use the chopsticks! You’ll eat more slowly, since you can’t grasp as much food with them at one time as you can with your normal fork and knife.

Asian Food Choices

Less healthy choices

1. Fried egg rolls, spare ribs, tempura
2. Battered or deep-fried dishes (sweet and sour pork, General Tso’s chicken)
3. Deep-fried tofu
4. Coconut milk, sweet and sour sauce, regular soy sauce
5. Fried rice
6. Salads with fried or crispy noodles

Healthier choices

1. Egg drop, miso, wonton, or hot & sour soup
2. Stir-fried, steamed, roasted or broiled entrees (Shrimp chow mein, chop suey)
3. Steamed or baked tofu
4. Sauces such as ponzu, rice-wine vinegar, wasabi, ginger, and low-sodium soy sauce
5. Steamed brown rice
6. Edamame, cucumber salad, stir-fried veggies

Healthy Italian fast food

The anti-carbohydrate revolution has given Italian food a bad rap, but Italian is actually one of the easiest types of cuisine to make healthy. Stay away from fried, oily or overly buttery, as well as thick crust menu items, and you can keep your diet goals intact.

Watch out for the following terms, which are common culprits of high fat and calories: alfredo, carbonara, saltimbocca, parmigiana, lasagna, manicotti, stuffed (all have heavy amounts of cream and cheese).

Generally Italian places have lots of veggies in their kitchen so it’s easy to ask to have extra veggies added to your meal.



Italian and Pizza Restaurant Choices

Less healthy choices

1. Thick-crust or butter-crust pizza with extra cheese and meat toppings
2. Garlic bread
3. Antipasto with meat
4. Pasta with cream or butter-based sauce
5. Entrée with side of pasta
6. Fried (“Frito”) dishes

Healthier choices

1. Thin-crust pizza with half the cheese and extra veggies
2. Plain rolls or breadsticks
3. Antipasto with vegetables
4. Pasta with tomato sauce and veggies
5. Entrée with side of veggies
6. Grilled (“Griglia”) dishes

Chains with natural, high quality fast food

Some fast food restaurants are working hard to make their food both healthier and tastier. One example is Chipotle, where their motto is “Food with Integrity”. The objective is to serve food that is better tasting, comes from better sources, is better for the environment, better for the animals, better for the farmers, and in turn this produces food that is better for us to eat.

Unfortunately their portion sizes are still huge, so be sure to always pay attention to calories and fat content.

http://helpguide.org/life/fast_food_nutrition.htm