

Lesson 9 *The Biggest Loser*

Eating On the Go!

Eating on the go is just a fact of life now days. Approximately 50 billion meals are eaten away from home each year in the U.S. and almost half of the U.S. food dollar is spent at restaurants or for foods that are prepared outside of the home.

There are a variety of reasons why people eat out more today than ever before. The most common reasons are:

- ▶ Schedules do not allow enough time to prepare meals at home.
- ▶ There is a lack of knowledge about how to prepare food at home.
- ▶ The work of preparation and clean up is shifted to the restaurant workers.
- ▶ It is easier to socialize with others when eating out than when cooking a meal at home.
- ▶ Eating out is considered fun and a form of relaxation and entertainment.

Regardless of whether you eat meals at home or away from home, it is important to make wise food choices to maintain an appropriate weight and to get the variety of nutrients needed for good health.

Concerns about *Eating On The Go!*

Variety - Our bodies, and our taste buds, need a variety of foods daily. Meals on the go often lack fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and foods that provide the calcium, fiber and vitamins and minerals necessary for good health.

Portions – The size of portions that are offered has increased tremendously over the years. The average hamburger in the 1950s was 1.5 ounces – now the average is 4 ounces with supersized burgers being 8 ounces or more. A serving of French fries back then was about 27 fries and today has grown to around 96. A carbonated beverage came in a 7 ounce bottle rather than the 20 ounce container of today, and instead of a 9 inch plate our food is now served on plates the size of platters. These growing portion sizes can play a role in overeating which can lead to excess energy intake and weight gain.

Food Preparation – Foods that are more highly processed and prepared usually contain greater amounts of fat, salt and/or sugar than foods prepared at home.

Beverages - Beverages account for lots of calories when eating out. This is especially true when the beverage is included as part of the meal and we're tempted to choose it rather than paying extra for a different option or not taking it at all.

Strategies for *Eating On The Go!*

1. Start the meal by having a vegetable salad. This will help you control hunger and feel satisfied sooner. Be aware that salads aren't always a healthy choice especially if they are loaded with condiments that add lots of calories. Ask for the salad dressing to be served on the side so you can decide how much you want to eat.

2. Look for foods that are prepared and/or served without cream sauces, gravies, added cheese, etc. Ask how a dish is prepared so you can make an informed choice. Select entrée items that are prepared by grilling, broiling, poaching, steaming or stir-fried. Request that sauces or accretments, such as butter and sour cream on potatoes, be served on the side so you decide how much to use. Condiments on sandwiches such as mayonnaise, cheese, special sauces, etc. add calories.
3. Select menu items that include as many food groups as possible, such as stir fry or kabobs. Choosing side dishes of salads and “free” vegetables like cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, green beans, peppers, tomatoes, and mushrooms rather than pasta, potatoes or other options help curb calories and add important nutrients to your meal.
4. Selecting foods high in fiber is often difficult when eating out. Select bread or pasta products made with whole grains. Choose fresh fruits or vegetables which have more fiber than if served cooked.
5. Order water with your meal or choose unsweetened tea/coffee or low-fat or fat-free milk. Avoid high sugar and/or high fat beverages such as specialty coffee drinks, sweetened teas, soda pop and other high sugar beverages that account for lots of extra calories.
6. Pack your own supply of fruits, vegetables, string cheese, water, etc. so you aren’t tempted to buy sweet or salty snacks while on the road. This also gives you healthy sides to go with a drive through sandwich instead of ordering French fries or onion rings.

Portion control when *Eating On The Go!*

- ❖ Order an appetizer and a soup or salad rather than an entrée. When selecting appetizers, be careful about ordering items that have been heavily breaded, deep fried or made with sauces.
- ❖ Order from the menu instead of heading for the “all you can eat” buffet.
- ❖ If the restaurant provides the option, order a small or medium portion rather than regular.
- ❖ Another strategy is to eat out at lunch rather than dinner for a special occasion. Restaurants often have the same menu options but with smaller portions and lower prices at lunch.
- ❖ Select items you can share with your dining partner(s). Some menu items are easy to divide such as sandwiches, soup, meatloaf, chicken breast, or boneless steak.
- ❖ Ask for a “take-home” container when the meal is ordered. When the entrée is served, immediately set aside the portion you want to take home. **Caution:** Make sure you’ll be home within a 2 hour time period of receiving the food so you can put it in the refrigerator for safe storage.
- ❖ When you have eaten the amount of food you desire, ask the server to remove the plate - even if others are still eating. This will keep you from “nibbling” on the leftovers.

Resources: National Restaurant Association; “WIN Kids”, University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension; USDA, MyPyramid.gov

A *Healthier Weigh*, CSU Extension, Logan and Morgan counties and Golden Plains Area

Colorado State University, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Southeast Area including Baca, Bent, Cheyenne, Crowley, Kiowa, Prowers and Otero counties cooperating. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

