

Dining out with diabetes

Diabetes doesn't have to stop you from enjoying life's pleasures. And that includes dining out. You can eat out and still stay on your meal plan. Here are some tips that can help.

Stay on schedule

If you take diabetes pills or injectable diabetes medicines, timing of your meals may be important. So it's a good idea to plan ahead.

- If you'll be dining with family or friends, ask if they would be willing to eat when you usually eat so you can stay on schedule
- Avoid times when restaurants are usually busy so you won't have to wait. If you're not sure when the busy times are, call ahead and ask
- Make reservations and arrive promptly. When you call, or when you arrive at the restaurant, consider mentioning that you have diabetes so timing of your meal matters
- Think about looking at the restaurant's menu online. That way you can decide on a healthy choice while still at home and you won't waste time looking at the menu
- Before ordering, ask whether the dish you want will take extra time to prepare
- If you will be eating lunch or dinner later than usual, think about eating a fruit or starch at your usual mealtime

When it's time to order

Don't just choose the first meal that looks good to you. Think carefully about how the food will fit into your meal plan.

- If you don't know what is in a dish or how it's prepared, ask the server so you can decide whether it fits into your meal plan
- If you're counting carbs, ask about "hidden" carbs, like flour or cornstarch in sauces and soups
- If you're on a low-salt meal plan, ask for your meal without added salt
- Ask for salad dressing, sauces, and gravy to be served on the side. That way you can control how much you use
- Ask if a dish can be grilled or broiled instead of fried
- Mix and match menu items your way. If it fits your meal plan better, order a salad and soup or an appetizer instead of an entrée
- Don't hesitate to ask for substitutes. For example, if your meal comes with French fries, ask for a vegetable instead
- Consider ordering one meal to share with someone else at the table



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When your food arrives

You're hungry and you're ready to dig in! But take a moment to think about these tips first, so you can be sure to stay on your meal plan.

- Try to eat the same size portion you normally would. Restaurant portions tend to be large. So estimate your normal portion and put the extra food in a container to go before you begin to eat. That way you won't be tempted to eat everything on the plate
- You can estimate portion sizes even when you can't measure. For example:
 - A serving of meat, fish, or poultry is 3 ounces—about the size of the palm of your hand
 - A serving of cheese is 1 ounce—about the size of your thumb
 - A serving of milk, yogurt, or fresh vegetables is 1 cup—about the size of a tennis ball
- Don't pour dressing on your salad. Instead, the American Diabetes Association suggests that you dip the tip of your fork in the salad dressing and then spear a piece of lettuce. You'll use less dressing that way
- Try to limit alcohol and sugary drinks. They add calories but no nutrients to your meal
- Don't rush! Eat slowly and really enjoy your meal



When it's time to head home

Just a couple of things before you go:

- Was it easy for you to order because there were a lot of healthy choices on the menu? Let the manager know. Restaurants want to please you, and they'll only know what you want if you tell them
- Don't forget that to-go container for tomorrow!

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