

The truth about fast food



When life gets busy, it's tempting to reach for the convenience of traditional fast food options. Just as the name says, it's fast and is found pretty much everywhere. However, these types of food come with real downsides.

Many traditional fast food options do not provide quality nutrition and may even be harmful to your health.



WHY WE EAT FAST FOOD

A few common reasons people choose fast food include:

- **Lack of time:** Long work hours and packed extracurricular schedules leave little time for home-cooked meals.
- **Convenience:** Adults with little free time or few cooking skills may prefer the ease of ready-to-eat food.
- **Food environment:** Some communities lack adequate access to grocery stores that carry fresh, whole food. Fast food may be all that is available nearby.
- **Financial resources:** Fast food is more expensive than food prepared at home. As income goes up, the use of fast food tends to increase as well.

HEALTH IMPACT OF FAST FOOD

An occasional fast food meal isn't a problem for most people. However, regular consumption carries several health risks:

- Fast food is high in fat, saturated fat, salt, sugar, and calories.
- Portion sizes are often very large.
- Fast food restaurants rely on highly processed food ingredients and offer few fresh fruits and vegetables.

Diets high in processed food, fat, calories, sugar, and salt may increase your risk of many chronic diseases, including:

- Obesity
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Cancer

BETTER OPTIONS

If you find yourself stuck choosing fast food, try some of these better options when you order:

- Opt for broth soups and salads.
- Choose low-fat dressings on the side.
- Look for whole-grain bread or bagels instead of croissants or biscuits.
- Get the regular or junior size to avoid excessive portions.
- Order the single patty without bacon or cheese. Ask for extra lettuce and tomato.
- Skip the soda and lemonade. Choose plain or sparkling water.