

Making Smart Choices When Eating Out

by Martha Smith

After your stroke, your doctor may tell you that it is a good idea to change your diet and make more healthy choices, but we all know that this can be hard when eating out, but staying on track when eating out is possible! Here are some of my favorite tips to still enjoy eating out, but be health conscious at the same time.

Breakfast

I love going out to eat breakfast — from french toast to egg and cheese bagels, there are numerous options. Here are some easy changes you can make to your go-to orders healthier: I asked for fresh fruit with my omelet instead of toast to reduce carbs and add some more nutrients!

1. **Ask for your toast, pancakes, etc. with the butter on-the-side.** Restaurants typically put multiple servings of butter on almost everything. An easy way to cut the fat and calories is to ask for this on the side. That way, you are in control of how much butter you use.
2. **Swap out bacon or home fries for fresh fruit.** Typically, breakfast entrees come with both potatoes and toast. Fresh fruit is a great substitution for these as it lowers your carbohydrate intake and adds some vitamins.
3. **Substitute egg whites in omelettes.** This substitution lowers calories and doesn't sacrifice much flavor!
4. **Limit coffee sweetener.** At places like Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts, drinks can easily add up to 200+ calories by the time you add sweetener, cream and milk. When you order drinks with flavors like vanilla or pumpkin, anywhere from 4-6 pumps of sweetener are used. To limit this, try asking for just 1 or 2 pumps when you're ordering coffee at your local coffee chain. If you like milk, try almond or non-fat instead of whole milk to reduce fat and save some calories.

Lunch and Dinner

1. **Ask for dressing on the side.** Surprisingly, salads can be very high in calories. Restaurants like Cheesecake Factory and Applebee's have salads on their menus that are over 1,000 calories, and have quite a bit of fat. Most of these calories come from the dressing. When ordering salads, an easy way to make them healthier is to ask for the dressing on the side and to only use the amount you feel like you need. Even better, you can ask for oil and vinegar instead of dressing, which adds healthy fat from the olive oil.
2. **Sauces can also be made on the side!** I love trying various cuisines such as thai and indian. They use spices such as tumeric and ginger which have anti-inflammatory and immune benefits, which make them great restaurant options. However, their sauces can add calories and fat, so when ordering, I usually ask for less sauce. Some restaurants can even put the sauce on the side. Pictured below is a thai dish in which the sauce was placed on the side.

Vacations

Find grocery stores that sell wholesome options when you're on road trips. When on vacation, it is hard to maintain a healthy diet. It is easy to be tempted by the numerous fast food options that crowd the highways. However, an easy way to stay on track is to find grocery stores along your drive and near your final destination with hot food bars like Wegmans or Whole Foods. Store like these chains have plenty of healthy choices, and are a good break from eating out every day. Plus, you can pick up healthy snacks like fruits and vegetables.

Dessert

Frozen yogurt is a protein-packed, low-calorie option! Frozen yogurt is also a healthy alternative to traditional ice cream. Frozen yogurt can be lower in calories than regular ice cream and it also is a good source of probiotics, friendly bacteria that help your gut. Pictured below is plain frozen yogurt with some fruit.