

Eating out

Everyone enjoys a meal out from time to time. But if you are eating out regularly this could have a big affect on your overall food intake. Don't forget that meals in the work canteen, business lunches, "quick bites" at the pub after work, private dinners and restaurant meals, all add up!

If you want to be more in control when you sit down to a meal in a restaurant or café try these general tips.

Before you go:

- Getting sight of the menu before you go allows you to choose sensible options ahead of time. Some fast food restaurants have websites with "nutritional calculators" which allow you to check out what is in the food before you buy
- Take the edge off your hunger. Eat a piece of fruit or drink a glass of water so you don't feel like eating so much when you are out

Once there:

- Take some plain bread from the bread basket, but avoid butter, garlic bread, oil or high fat dips. A salsa dip would be a better choice

Choosing from the menu:

- Plan ahead. Consider what you will be eating later in the day and choose a meal to balance that out
- Try to only have 1 or 2 courses. Perhaps have two starters instead of a starter and a main course! Alternatively share a starter or dessert
- Don't be afraid to ask for what you want: vegetables without butter, sauces or dressings on the side, plain salads, and descriptions of dishes you're not familiar with
- Choose plenty of vegetables with your main course
- Go for dishes which are steamed, braised, grilled or baked. Avoid anything fried, or sauteed and creamy sauces, pastry and large portions of meat as these can be high in fat

When your meal arrives:

- Pace yourself - eat slowly and try not to be the first to finish
- Accompany your meal with a glass of iced water and limit sugary or alcoholic drinks as these will bump up the overall calories of your meal
- Don't be afraid to leave what you don't want or don't need.
- Try to leave the table feeling comfortable, not bloated