

AMERICAN  
HEART  
HEALTH  
MONTH

# fast food for a Healthy Heart



When we think of American Heart Health Month we do not usually think of “fast food.” When we hear “fast food” typically the words that come to mind are “unhealthy,” “convenient,” and “cheap.” Many fast-food restaurants now offer healthier options or allow for customization to create more balanced meals. Prioritizing lean proteins, whole grains, and plenty of vegetables can make fast food part of a healthy diet in moderation. Follow these tips and tricks to put a healthy spin on your next fast-food order.

- **Grilled over Fried.** Select grilled chicken or fish instead of fried or breaded versions.
- **Salads with Caution.** Choose salads with plenty of vegetables, lean protein, and a vinaigrette (oil and vinegar-based) or light dressing. Avoid or limit high-calorie toppings like croutons, cheese, and creamy dressings.
- **Portion Control.** Choose smaller portion sizes or kids’ meals to manage calorie intake.
- **Skip the Extras.** Avoid adding extra cheese, bacon, or mayonnaise. Instead, ask for extra veggies in sandwiches, salads, pizzas, and wraps.
- **Drink Smart.** Opt for water, unsweetened iced tea, or other low-calorie beverages instead of sugary sodas.
- **Dressings On the Go.** Order dressing and sauces on the side, so you can control how much is added.
- **Share Dessert.** Split with the table, choose the smallest size, or order fresh fruit instead.
- **Come Prepared.** Read the menu before you go, so you have time to make a healthy choice.
- **Be Mindful of Nutrition Facts & Ingredients.** Look for each of these:
  - ✓ **Calories** – Choose lower-calorie, nutrient-dense foods like vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins.
  - ✓ **Sodium** – Aim for less than 2,300 mg of sodium daily.
  - ✓ **Fat** – Choose items that have more heart healthy unsaturated fatty acids, such as avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil. Choose less saturated fats like butter, fried food, full fat dairy products, baked goods, and processed foods.
  - ✓ **Added Sugar** – Aim for less than 10% of your daily calories from added sugars.
  - ✓ **Whole Foods** – Look for menu items that include more whole foods rather than highly processed ones.
  - ✓ **Whole Grains** – Swap white bread for whole grain bread for more heart healthy fiber.
  - ✓ **Lean Meats** – Choose lean meats, such as chicken, turkey, or seafood over fattier meats, such as beef, pork, and bacon. Or select a plant-based protein like beans or a veggie burger.
  - ✓ **Vegetables and Fruits** – Add extra fruits and vegetables to your next to-go salad or sandwich for more vitamins and minerals in your diet.

AMERICAN  
HEART  
HEALTH  
MONTH

# fast food for a Healthy Heart



## Choose **THIS** vs. **THAT**:

Grilled Meat



VS.

Fried or Breaded Meats



Side Salad or Fruit Cup



VS.

Fries



Fat-Free or Low-Fat (1%) Milk



VS.

Milkshake



Water, 100% Fruit Juice, or Unsweetened Iced Tea



VS.

Soda



Extra Veggies



VS.

Extra Bacon or Cheese

