Eating Away From Home with Diabetes

There are times when you will eat in a restaurant or you will have meals that have been prepared by someone else. You can enjoy eating out. Note that the portions in restaurants may be much larger than needed. Listed below are some ideas to help you choose foods that will keep your blood sugar in better control.

HINTS FOR EATING OUT

- Know your meal plan and how many carbohydrate choices you should have at each meal. You may wish to carry a copy of your meal plan in your purse or wallet. Learn the foods included in each food group.
- Make a list of restaurants near you that offer healthy choices and pick up carry out menus to see what they offer. You can then plan what you will order ahead of time.
- Become familiar with serving sizes by practicing them at home using measuring cups and spoons. Once you learn to recognize portion sizes, you will be able to correctly estimate the amount of total carbohydrate you are allowed to eat at the restaurant. Ask for a "to-go box" if the portion is more than you should have. When your food comes, leave the amount you should have on the plate, and put the rest in the to-go box before you start eating.
- Plan ahead if your meal time will be different than usual. Check with your caregiver to find out how to time meals and medication if you are taking insulin.
- Avoid high fat foods such as fried foods, cream sauces, full fat salad dressings or any added butter or margarine.
- **Do not** be afraid to ask questions. Ask your server about the portion size, cooking methods, ingredients and if items can be substituted. Restaurants do not list all available items on the menu. You can ask for your main entree to be prepared using skim milk, oil instead of butter or margarine, and without gravy or sauces. Ask your waiter or waitress to serve salad dressings, gravy, sauces, margarine, and sour cream on the side. You can then add the amount your meal plan suggests.
- Add more vegetables whenever possible.
- Avoid items that are labeled “jumbo,” “giant” deluxe” or” super sized.”
- You may want to split an entrée with someone and order an extra side salad.
- Watch for hidden calories in foods like croutons, bacon or cheese.
- Ask your server to take away the bread basket or chips from your table.
- Order a dinner salad as an appetizer.

You can eat most foods served in a restaurant. Some foods are better choices than others.

FOOD GROUP: Breads & Starches
RECOMMENDED: All kinds of bread (wheat, rye, white, oatmeal, Italian, French, raisin); hard or soft dinner rolls; frankfurter or hamburger buns; small bagels, small corn or whole wheat flour tortillas.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Frosted or glazed breads; butter rolls; egg or cheese breads; croissants; sweet rolls; pastries; coffee cake; glazed or frosted doughnuts, muffins.

FOOD GROUP: Crackers
RECOMMENDED: Animal crackers, graham, rye, saltine, oyster, and matzoth crackers. Bread sticks, melba toast; rusks, pretzels, popcorn (without fat), zwieback toast.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: High-fat snack crackers or chips. Buttered popcorn.

FOOD GROUP: Cereals
RECOMMENDED: Hot and cold cereals. Whole grains such as oatmeal or shredded wheat are good choices.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Sugar-coated or granola type cereals.

FOOD GROUP: Potatoes/Pasta/Rice/Beans
RECOMMENDED: Order baked, boiled, or mashed potatoes; rice or noodles without added fat; whole beans.

Order gravies, butter, margarine, or sauces on the side so you can control the amount you add.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Hash brown or fried potatoes. Potatoes, pasta, or rice prepared with cream or cheese sauce. Potato or pasta salads prepared with large amounts of dressing. Fried beans or fried rice.

FOOD GROUP: Vegetables
RECOMMENDED: Order steamed, baked, boiled, or stewed vegetables without sauces or extra fat. Ask that sauce be served on the side. If vegetables are not listed on the menu, ask what is available.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Vegetables prepared with cream, butter, or cheese sauce. Fried vegetables.

FOOD GROUP: Salad Bars
RECOMMENDED: Many of the vegetables at a salad bar are considered "free." Use lemon juice, vinegar, or low-calorie salad dressing (fewer than 20 calories per serving) as “free” dressings for your salad. Look for salad bar ingredients that have no added fat or sugar such as tomatoes, lettuce, cucumbers, brocolli, carrots, onions and mushrooms.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Prepared salads with large amounts of dressing, such as coleslaw, caesar salad, macaroni salad, bean salad or carrot salad.

FOOD GROUP: Fruit
RECOMMENDED: Eat fresh fruit or fresh fruit salad without added dressing. A salad bar often offers fresh fruit choices, but canned fruit at a restaurant is usually packed in sugar or syrup.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Sweetened canned or frozen fruits, plain or sweetened fruit juice. Fruit salads with dressing, sour cream, or sugar added to them.

FOOD GROUP: Meat & Substitutes
RECOMMENDED: Order broiled, baked, roasted, or grilled meat, poultry, or fish. Trim off all visible fat. **Do not** eat the skin of poultry. The size stated on the menu is the raw weight; meat shrinks by 1/4 in cooking (for example, 4 oz. raw equals 3 oz. cooked meat).
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Deep-fat fried meat, poultry, or fish. Breaded meats.

FOOD GROUP: Eggs
RECOMMENDED: Order soft or hard cooked eggs, or poached, or scrambled. Omelets may be okay, depending on what ingredients are added. Egg substitutes are also a good choice.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Fried eggs, eggs prepared with cream or cheese sauce.

FOOD GROUP: Milk
RECOMMENDED: Order lowfat or fat free milk according to your meal plan. Plain, nonfat yogurt or flavored yogurt with no sugar added may be used as a substitute for milk. Soy milk may also be used.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Milk shakes or sweetened milk beverages.

FOOD GROUP: Soups & Combination Foods
RECOMMENDED: Clear broth or consommé are free foods and may be used as an appetizer. Broth-based soups with fat removed count as a starch serving and are preferred over cream soups. Soups made with beans or split peas may be eaten but count as a starch.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Fatty soups; soup made with cream; cheese soup. Combination foods prepared with excessive amounts of fat or with cream or cheese sauces.

FOOD GROUP: Desserts & Sweets
RECOMMENDED: Ask for fresh fruit. Sponge or angel food cake without icing, ice milk, no sugar added ice cream, sherbet, or frozen yogurt may fit into your meal plan occasionally.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Pastries, puddings, pies, cakes with icing, custard, gelatin desserts.

FOOD GROUP: Fats & Oils

RECOMMENDED: Choose healthy fats such as olive oil, canola oil or tub margarine, reduced fat or fat free sour cream, cream cheese, avocado or nuts.
AVOID/USE SPARINGLY: Any fats in excess of your allowed portion. Deep-fried foods or any food with a large amount of fat.

NOTE
Ask for all fats to be served on the side, and limit your portion sizes according to your meal plan.

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