

Making Better Food Service Choices

Have you ever been out to the ball park and seen people carrying those little cardboard snack trays overflowing with steamed broccoli, cauliflower and bottles of orange juice? No? Well, how about standing in a stop-and-go convenience store line and hearing the guy in front of you tell his buddy, “*Man, they serve the best grilled salmon and asparagus here.*” Still no?

It’s pretty certain none of us have seen or heard anything like it at those places. After all, these food service vendors are mainly there to boost our entertainment and make our lives more convenient. We’re not necessarily thinking about the healthiest food choices when we’re having fun or on-the-go, right?

The truth is that we should take the time to think about what foods are available to us outside of the grocery store and our own refrigerator. Why? Well, rather than tell you a bunch of statistics about the number of Americans whose lives are seriously compromised by chronic disease, think about the power in this:

Consistently making better food choices can help us

- Feel energetic
- Prevent certain illnesses
- Reverse an unhealthy condition
- Control the symptoms and damaging effects of a chronic illness
- Heal faster after colds or injuries
- Stay well

And spending more time feeling well can mean more days visiting the ball park with friends or family, more pleasant vacations and social activities, and staying productive at work. Basically, helping ourselves stay well by making better choices just makes good sense.

We can get food just about anywhere now - from vending machines, cafeterias, restaurants, diners, fast-food drive throughs, pubs, convenience stores, snack bars, coffee shops and even retail stores. And believe it or not, **healthier options are available** no matter where you choose to eat.

Always remember to balance your eating plan by not relying on quick food service options too often. Here are just a few tips to consider the next time you want a meal or a snack and must choose among convenience foods. Try to work in some tasty, nutrient-packed options instead of high-calorie, high-fat choices.

- Choose “grilled” over “fried” or “crispy” items
- Opt for diet soda, water, unsweetened tea or 100% fruit juice
- Share a bag of peanuts instead of eating a whole bag
- Choose a small cup of low-fat frozen yogurt instead of ice cream
- Pick a small bag of pretzels over a large bag of potato chips
- Enjoy a few whole wheat crackers with some peanut butter
- Try string cheese snacks



Did you know that anthem.com/ca is full of information on healthy eating and weight loss? That's right! Go there for more information.

For more on healthy eating visit these additional sites:

- National Cancer Institute – www.cancer.gov or www.5aday.gov
- National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health – www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/nutrition.html
- American Dietetic Association – www.eatright.org/Public/NutritionInformation/index_17390.cfm
- American Cancer Society – www.cancer.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – www.cdc.gov
- National Institutes of Health – www.nih.gov
- U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – www.mypyramid.gov

Source:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*, www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines

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