Limit Fast Food

Fast food is a popular choice on the go, but it’s not something you should eat every day. This handout will give you tips on making smart choices when it comes to fast food. It will also tell you what happens to your body if you eat fast food too often.

WHAT IS FAST FOOD?

Fast food is food from a take-out restaurant that is made quickly and easily. It is also usually cheap. Popular fast food restaurants include McDonald’s®, Burger King®, Wendy’s® and Dunkin Donuts®. Restaurants also include take-out, pizza shops and sub shops.

WHY IS EATING TOO MUCH FAST FOOD A PROBLEM?

Fast food isn’t as healthy as fresh food or certain homemade foods. Fast food has a lot of unhealthy fat, too many calories and lots of extra sugar and salt. It usually comes in portions (servings) that are too big to eat in 1 serving.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY BODY OVER TIME IF I EAT TOO MUCH FAST FOOD?

Here is what happens to your body if you eat too much fast food.

- Extra weight gain
- Acne (pimples)
- Bloating or puffiness
- Headaches
- Having trouble catching your breath (shortness of breath)
- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- A higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes later in life. Type 2 diabetes is when your body can’t break down sugar properly.

HOW CAN I MAKE SMARTER CHOICES WHEN I EAT FAST FOOD?

Fast food should be a treat every once in a while. You should try to eat fast food no more than 1 time a week.

Here are some tips on making smarter choices when ordering fast food:

- **Order the smallest size possible or from the kids’ menu.** The smallest sizes have the least amount of unhealthy fat, extra sugar and salt. Sometimes, on the kids’ menu, you can swap 1 food for another healthier option. For example, order fruit instead of French fries.

- **Make smarter drink choices.** Order water, skim milk or low-fat milk. Soda and juice have extra sugar and calories. Diet soda doesn’t have sugar, but it can still make you gain weight.

- **Ask for sauces, condiments and dressings on the side.** This way, you can control how much sauce or dressing goes on your food. Make sure your salad dressings are low-fat or reduced fat.

- **Choose food that is baked or grilled.** Stay away from foods that are fried or breaded (coated in breadcrumbs before frying).

- **Order from the healthy or light sections of the menu.** Many restaurants now have healthier options that are separate from the usual menu.

- **Read the nutrition information on the restaurant’s website.** If you can’t find it online, ask for the nutrition information at the restaurant. Many restaurants will show you the nutrition information if you ask for it.

A note for your parents...

Eating fast food more than 1 time a week can raise your child’s risk for being overweight or having other health issues. Try making and eating as many meals at home as possible. When you go out to eat, remember there are healthier choices at most restaurants.