

# Eating Out and Enjoying It

Note to the Health Care Provider: When counseling women with gestational diabetes mellitus about eating out, consider the following strategies:

- Advise the woman to inquire about ingredients and cooking methods before ordering a dish.
- Suggest ordering foods that are steamed, broiled, grilled, baked, or poached, and avoiding foods that are fried.
- Explain the importance of limiting foods prepared with high-calorie sauces and creams. Advise the client to ask for the sauce, gravy or dressing on the side to control calories.
- Explain the importance of portion control. Encourage the woman to order small servings or take extra food home.
- Caution the woman to limit appetizers and side dishes that are high in calories, fat, and carbohydrates, such as chips with dips and breads. Raw vegetables are excellent low-calorie, nutrient-dense choices.
- Explain that the woman should carry self-monitoring supplies to test her blood glucose levels when she eats out.
- If the client takes insulin, remind her to follow her insulin plan when she eats away from home. The client can help prevent blood glucose excursions by knowing her insulin peak times. (See *Insulin Use in Pregnancy* handout.)

# Eating Out and Enjoying It



You can eat out and still keep your blood glucose and weight under control. Using the food plan that your registered dietitian (RD) gave you as a guide, you can enjoy restaurant meals!

## How to Follow Your Food Plan in a Restaurant

When you eat out, follow the same food plan that you use for eating at home. Before you go out for a meal, note how many carbohydrate choices you can have. Then follow these tips:

- Select a restaurant that has healthier food selections and smaller portions.
- Order your food broiled, grilled, roasted, baked, stir-fried, blackened, or steamed. These choices are lower in fat and calories than foods that are fried, sautéed, breaded, or dipped in batter.
- If you do order a hamburger, french fries, or any other fried, high-fat food, order a small size instead of medium or large.
- Ask for sauces, gravy, sour cream, butter, and salad dressing on the side. That way, you can control how much of these high-calorie foods you eat.
- When choosing a side dish or appetizer, order a salad, fresh fruit, plain baked potato, or raw vegetables with a low-calorie dip. Steamed or grilled vegetables are also good choices.
- If you are not sure how a dish is made, ask the waiter.
- Ask whether the restaurant can specially prepare a dish so it will fit into your food plan. Many restaurants are happy to help.
- Try not to fill up on bread, breadsticks, chips, or rolls before your main meal. If you do eat some of these foods, be sure to include them when you count carbohydrate choices for the meal. If you don't count them, your blood glucose may rise above normal.
- If you are hungry before you go out to eat, have one carbohydrate choice, such as six saltines (with cheese) or a small piece of fruit, to help curb your appetite.

- Remember to control portions. Restaurant meals are often larger than what you would eat at home. Share your food with someone, or take some of it home and eat it the next day.
- Review the Lower-Calorie Menu Choices chart. You can get fewer calories by choosing foods on the left instead of those on the right.



<b>Lower-Calorie Menu Choices</b>	
<b>Order</b>	<b>Instead Of</b>
Steamed rice, brown rice, boiled pasta	Fried rice or fried noodles
Steamed vegetables or stir-fried vegetables	Fried vegetables, vegetables in cream sauce, vegetables in butter sauce, vegetables in cheese sauce, vegetable egg rolls
Grilled, roasted, or baked chicken (always take the skin off before eating)	Fried chicken or chicken nuggets
Pasta dishes with tomato sauce	Pasta dishes with cheese sauce or cream sauce
Sandwiches made with lean beef, turkey or ham (deli meats should be served steaming hot so you won't get sick from food poisoning)	Sandwiches made with salami or bologna
Canadian bacon	Regular bacon
Small fruit cup	Cakes, cheesecake, cookies, pies, or pastries
Plain water, seltzer, or diet soda	Fruit juices, fruit drinks, or regular (not diet) soda
Baked tortilla chips	Fried tortilla chips
Baked potato with toppings on the side	French fries, onion rings, or potato chips
Vinegar-based salad dressing	Creamy salad dressing
Broth-based soup	Cream-based soup
Fat free or low-fat milk	Whole milk, cream, or half-and-half

## How To Measure Serving Sizes When Eating Out

You may find it difficult to measure food portions when you eat out. Here are some comparisons that you can use:



- 1 cup = your fist or a tennis ball
- ½ cup = a computer mouse or your palm
- 3 ounces of meat = your palm or a deck of playing cards
- 1 tablespoon = your thumb
- 2 tablespoons = a ping-pong ball or a roll of film

## Checking Blood Glucose While Eating Out

When you eat out, you must check your blood glucose level as you would for meals at home. Most people are more comfortable testing their blood glucose in a restroom. This lets you wash your hands before the test and clean up any blood spots after the test.

If you are comfortable and prepared, you can test at the table. To be polite, ask permission from the people sharing your table before you test there.

## Taking Insulin While Eating Out

If you usually take an insulin shot before a meal, you also need to do this when you eat out. You can take the shot in restroom or at the table (if you feel comfortable and your companions don't mind).

When you eat out, try to have your meals at about the same time you would usually eat. For example, if you usually eat dinner at 6 p.m., eat around that time when you go out.

You may need to delay taking your insulin shot if your meal is later than usual. Ask your doctor, RD, or diabetes educator about what to do if your meal is delayed.