



**FACT SHEET:**

## Eating out

Eating out and having a take-away meals are enjoyable parts of life. Having diabetes does not stop you from sharing a meal with family and friends.

If you only eat out occasionally, the choices you make are less likely to affect your overall diabetes management. If eating out is a regular part of your life, it is important to try and choose healthy options.

### Making healthy food choices

Healthy eating includes choosing from a variety of foods, such as vegetables, wholegrains, fruit, lean meats and poultry, fish, legumes, eggs and low-fat dairy foods.

Where possible, try to choose high-fibre, low-glycemic index (GI) carbohydrate (carb) foods. Low-GI foods are more slowly digested and absorbed, resulting in a gradual rise in blood glucose levels.

It is also important to limit foods that are high in saturated fat, added sugars and salt (sodium).

### Dining out

Many restaurants and cafes serve food that fits into a healthy eating plan. It is a good idea to

ask staff about the dish of your choice and how it has been cooked. You can then ask for simple changes if you need to. Some have menus online. This means you can plan ahead and see what healthier choices are available.

### What to choose

- Clear or vegetable-based soups rather than creamy soups
- Extra salad or steamed vegetables as a side dish
- Olive oil or vinegar-based rather than creamy dressings for salads
- An entrée-size meal as a main dish
- Grilled, stir-fried, braised or barbecued dishes with lean meats and plenty of vegetables
- Dishes with lean cuts of meat, seafood or skinless chicken
- Vegetarian dishes made with legumes or tofu
- Entrée sizes for pasta dishes and risotto, with tomato or vegetable-based sauces

- Fresh fruit salad or sorbet
- A small serving of dessert or share one between people
- Plain, mineral or soda water.

### What to avoid

- Dishes described as creamy, battered, crispy or fried
- Salads that contain creamy dressings or high-fat extras like croutons, cheese or deli meats
- Too many sauces, dressings and condiments. Ask for them to be served on the side and only use a small amount.
- Creamy curries and large servings of rice, noodles and flat breads when eating Asian or Indian-style meals
- Salty foods and adding extra salt to your meal
- Extras, such as bread and butter, chips, and chocolates with coffee
- Overeating, by limiting how often you go back for more and using smaller plates if you choose from a buffet.

If you drink alcohol, limit this to no more than four standard drinks. A standard drink is equivalent to 285 ml of regular beer, 425 ml of low-alcohol beer, 100 ml of wine, and 60 ml of fortified wine or 30 ml of spirits.

### Choosing take-aways

Nutrition information is available at major fast-food chains. Kilojoule (energy) content is usually displayed in-store. More detailed nutrition information is available online. Look for options with the lowest kilojoules.

### Hamburgers

- Choose a wholegrain or wholemeal roll if available.
- Ask for no butter, margarine, creamy sauces or mayonnaise on the roll.
- Ask for extra salad.
- Avoid burgers with 'the works' or 'the lot', and extras like bacon, egg and cheese.
- Choose lean meat, chicken, fish or a legume-based patty.

### Pizza

- Ask for a thin and crispy base instead of a thick, pan-fried pizza base.
- Choose vegetable and seafood toppings rather than processed meats.
- Limit toppings high in saturated fat and salt like salami, pepperoni and extra cheese.
- Avoid 'meat lovers' pizzas and stuffed crusts.

### Chicken

- Choose barbecued or grilled chicken rather than crumbed or fried.
- Choose salads or vegetables instead of chips. Look for olive oil or vinegar-based dressings.

### Fish and chips

- Ask for fish or seafood to be grilled (not fried).
- Choose thick/straight-cut chips or wedges instead of French fries. Ask for a small serve.
- Add a serve of garden salad if available.
- Ask for no salt to be added.

### Sandwiches

- Choose dense grainy, seeded or sourdough bread.
- Try hummus or avocado as a spread rather than butter.
- Choose low-fat fillings like lean skinless turkey or chicken, tuna or salmon, baked beans, boiled egg or cottage or ricotta cheese. Avoid processed meats.
- Add lots of salad.

### Drinks

- Choose plain, sparkling mineral or soda water.
- If you drink soft drinks, choose diet or no-sugar varieties.
- Limit fruit juice. Choose only small serves of 100% juice.
- Limit flavoured milk, smoothies or milkshakes. If you choose these, order a small serve.



### More information and support

- Go to [ndss.com.au](https://www.ndss.com.au) to search for 'Glycemic index', 'Making healthy food choices', 'Carbohydrate counting', 'Alcohol', 'Understanding food labels' and other fact sheet.
- Go to [ndss.com.au](https://www.ndss.com.au) to access the Carb Counting program online and other NDSS programs and services in your state or territory, or online.
- Go to [dietitiansaustralia.org.au](https://www.dietitiansaustralia.org.au) to find a dietitian or call Dietitians Australia on **1800 812 942**.



### Top tips

- Many restaurants and cafes serve food that easily fits into a healthy eating plan.
- Ask about the dish of your choice and the way it has been cooked when eating out. You can then ask for simple changes if you need to.
- A dietitian can help you with individualised advice on making healthy food choices and managing diabetes when eating out.
- Be mindful of portion sizes. Restaurants and cafés often serve large portions so only eat until you are satisfied. Consider ordering entrée size meals when available.

### Notes

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## The NDSS and you

Whether you have just been diagnosed with diabetes, or have been living with diabetes for a while, the NDSS provides a range of support services, information, and subsidised products to help you manage your diabetes, stay healthy and live well. For access to more resources (including translated versions), or to find out more about support services, go to [ndss.com.au](https://www.ndss.com.au) or call the NDSS Helpline on **1800 637 700**.

This information is intended as a guide only. It should not replace individual medical advice and if you have any concerns about your health or further questions, you should contact your health professional.