

Driver Safety Letter

presented by



Cultivating Healthy Eating Habits

March 2017



March is National Nutrition Month, a nutrition education and information campaign created annually in March by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

The theme for 2017 is "Put Your Best Fork Forward", which acts as a reminder that each bite counts. Making just small shifts in our food choices, can add up over time. The *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* suggest starting with small changes in order to make healthier lasting changes you can enjoy.

This year's theme for National Nutrition Month® inspires us to start with small changes in our eating habits – one forkful at a time. So whether you are planning meals to prepare at home or making selections when eating out, *Put Your Best Fork Forward* to help find your healthy eating style.

The challenge for you as a professional driver is that when you're hungry and on the run, fast food can really hit the spot. It's quick, tasty, and, best of all, convenient. But it's also loaded with calories, sugar, sodium, and fat—often enough in one meal for an entire day or more. And if you're feeding your whole family, it can be expensive, too—often more so than cooking at home.

Fast food menus are tricky when you're watching your weight or your health. Finding a healthy, well-balanced meal in most fast food restaurants is a challenge. But there are always healthier options hidden among the diet disasters. You just need to know where to look and how to order.

However, you can make healthy fast-food choices by knowing exactly what you are ordering and planning ahead. According to the American Diabetes Association, keep the ground rules of good nutrition in mind:

- **Order Wisely.** What you order is the key. It's easy to eat an entire day's worth of fat, salt, and calories in just one fast-food meal. But it's also possible to make wise choices and eat a fairly healthy meal.
- **Ask to see nutrition information for the foods.** Most fast food places have it available somewhere in the restaurant. You can also look it up online ahead of time. The average fast-food meal can run as high as 1,000 calories or more, and raise your blood sugar above your target range.
- **Know the nutritional value of the foods you order.** Although there are some good choices, most fast-food items are high in fat and calories. If you are looking at a combo meal, ask to substitute a side salad, carrots, or apple slices for the fries.
- If you're having fast-food for one meal, let your other meals that day contain healthier foods, like non-fried vegetables, fruit, and whole grains.
- **Think about how your food will be cooked.** Chicken and fish can be good choices, but they can have more calories and fat if they are breaded and deep fried.
- **Don't Go Jumbo.** Watch out for words like jumbo, giant, deluxe, biggie-sized or super-sized. Larger portions mean more calories. They also mean more saturated fat, cholesterol and salt. Stay away from double burgers or "super" hot dogs with cheese, chili, or sauces. Order a regular or junior-sized sandwich instead.
- **Watch the Toppings.** Order items plain, without toppings, rich sauces, or mayonnaise. Add flavor with mustard, and crunch with lettuce, tomato, and onion. Ask for your sandwich or burger without the cheese. It carries an extra 100 calories per ounce, as well as added fat and sodium. Choose grilled or broiled sandwiches with meats such as lean roast beef, turkey or chicken breast, or lean ham.
- **Be Bun Savvy.** Skip the croissant or biscuit. Eat your sandwich on a bun, bread or English muffin and save calories and fat.

doing an in-house letter, you may find information here that you can cut and paste into your own letter. If you are interested in specific subjects, or have any comments/feedback, contact Tom Moore, CTP, at tmoore@nptc.org or (703)838-8898.

- **Choose a Salad.** Go for the salad bar and fill your salad with things like carrots, peppers, onion, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, and other veggies. Toss on a few sunflower seeds to add some healthy fats and add lean protein like grilled chicken or beans or chick peas to add some protein. Watch out for potato and macaroni salads that are dressed with a lot of mayo, and other high-calorie toppings like dressings, bacon bits, cheeses, and croutons.
- **Take Care When Eating Globally.** Order bean burritos, soft tacos, fajitas, and other non-fried items when eating Mexican fast foods. Choose chicken over beef. Limit refried beans. Or ask if they have beans that aren't refried. Pile on extra lettuce, tomatoes, and salsa but go easy on cheese, sour cream, and guacamole. Watch out for deep-fried taco salad shells - a taco salad can have more than 1,000 calories. Pizza can be a good fast food choice. Go for thin crust pizza with vegetable toppings. Limit to 1-2 slices. Meat and extra cheese add calories, fat and sodium. Chinese food may seem like a healthy choice, but many dishes are deep fried or high in fat and sodium, especially in the sauces. You can ask for the sauce on the side so you eat less.
- **End on a Good Note.** End your meal with sugar-free, fat-free frozen yogurt or a small cone of fat-free yogurt. Better still, bring a piece of fresh fruit from home. Ices, sorbets, and sherbets have less fat and fewer calories than ice cream, but they are chock full of sugar. They can send your blood sugar too high if you don't work the extra carbohydrate into your meal plan.

Eating out can be a necessity. Make the right choices, ask for what you need, and balance your meals out with healthy meals at home.