



# Healthy Fast-Food Guide

The stereotypes about fast-food restaurants tend to be true: they often serve foods with poor nutrient density and have lots of processed options that are high in calories, sodium, sugars, and saturated fat. Conversely, it's often hard to find fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. But there are many nutritious options out there...if you know what to look for.

Most of the nutritional information in this guide is drawn from Canada's Food Guide and Health Canada, and is based on recommendations for the general Canadian population.



## PRO TIPS

- ✓ Keep your eye on **portion sizes**
- ✓ Look for **grilled or roasted lean meats** rather than deep-fried or battered options
- ✓ Don't be afraid to **special order**
- ✓ Don't assume that **"healthy sounding"** dishes are always your best option
- ✓ Be mindful of which **condiments and dressings** you choose
- ✓ Try to **replace sugary beverages** with water
- ✓ Be wise about side dishes and **pass on the french fries**
- ✓ **Skip high-fat toppings** such as bacon bits, cheese, croutons, and crispy noodles
- ✓ Look for **salads with grilled chicken, shrimp, or vegetables**

Check out the following pages for guides to different types of fast-food restaurants!

BREAKFAST

BURGERS

CHICKEN

MEXICAN

PIZZA

ASIAN

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## BREAKFAST

It's been said that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but it also tends to be the quickest one since people are usually rushing around each morning on the way to work or school. Many fast-food breakfast options are high in sodium and calories, but you can limit those issues by looking for items with both fibre and protein (but not too much fat).

### SIMPLE SWAPS

Bagel with cream cheese



English muffin with butter

Bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich



Egg sandwich on whole-wheat toast

Donut or pastry



Low-fat bran muffin

Smoothie



Yogurt with granola and fruit

French toast sticks or cinnamon roll



Oatmeal



## BURGERS

Hamburgers are probably the most common type of fast food we come across, and they're almost always accompanied by french fries and a sugary drink, which are high in calories but low in actual nutrition. Try to stick to low-calorie drinks and swap out the fries whenever you can!

### SIMPLE SWAPS

Double-patty cheeseburger



Single-patty hamburger without cheese

French fries



Baked potato or a side salad

Chicken "nuggets" or tenders



Grilled chicken strips

Salad with toppings like bacon, cheese, and ranch dressing



Salad with grilled chicken and low-fat dressing (like vinaigrettes)

Milkshake



Yogurt parfait or a vanilla sundae in a cup (no toppings or cone)



## CHICKEN

We usually assume chicken is healthier than beef, but it really depends on how it's prepared. Baked, broiled, or grilled options are better than fried or breaded chicken dishes. And the kind of meat also makes a difference—there are more calories in thighs and wings than breasts and drumsticks, and even more calories are packed into the skin of the chicken.



### SIMPLE SWAPS

Fried chicken (original or extra crispy)



Skinless chicken breast without breading

Deep-fried wings or popcorn chicken



Dry-rubbed baked wings

Fried chicken sandwich



Grilled chicken sandwich

Chicken and biscuit "bowl"



Chicken with mashed potatoes

## MEXICAN

Mexican food tends to incorporate fruits and vegetables like avocados, lettuce, and tomatoes, but fast-food chains also incorporate cheese into their dishes and tend to have large portion sizes, which can entice you to overeat. Soft tortillas are lower in fat and calories than their crispy counterparts, and corn tortillas have fewer calories and more fibre than wheat tortillas. Keep an eye out for Baja-style fish dishes, which tend to be healthier (as long as the fish isn't fried).

### SIMPLE SWAPS

Crispy shell taco



Soft taco

Ground beef or steak



Grilled fish or chicken

Crunch wraps or gordita-type burritos



Grilled "fresco"-style steak burrito

Beef and cheese burrito



Veggie and bean burrito



## PIZZA

Pizza covers a wide spectrum of food groups (veggies, dairy, grains, meats), but many options are low in nutritional value and high in fatty meats and cheeses. Make the best of your slice by ordering thin crust, going light on cheese, and loading it up with vegetables.



### SIMPLE SWAPS

Cheese-filled or deep-dish pizza



Thin-crust pizza (whole wheat, if available)

Pepperoni, meatballs, or sausage toppings



Chicken

Bacon



Ham

Garlic or "cheesy" bread



Plain rolls or breadsticks

Creamy dips



Tomato-based dips

## ASIAN

Many Asian dishes are loaded with vegetables like bell peppers, carrots, and broccoli, but they can also be high in sodium, and rice and noodle dishes are heavy on the carbs and calories. Think about skipping the deep-fried egg rolls, wontons, and tempura dishes and focus on vegetable dishes while limiting the amount of rice and noodles you eat.



### SIMPLE SWAPS

Deep-fried starters (egg rolls, tempura, fried wontons, etc)



Soup (egg drop, miso, wonton, or hot and sour soup)

Battered or deep-fried dishes (sweet and sour pork)



Stir-fried, steamed, roasted, or broiled dishes (chow mein, chop suey)

Fried rice



Steamed rice (brown instead of white rice, if available)

Sweet and sour sauce or regular soy sauce



Hot chili sauce or low-sodium soy sauce

Meat-based dishes



Vegetable-based dishes