

Eating Healthy on Vacation

Summer is the prime time to take a vacation. While vacations are a lot of fun and important for relaxation and stress, they can take a toll on our diets. We eat many of our meals in restaurants so we have less control over how food is prepared and how large the portion sizes are. We also tend to splurge while away which can wreak havoc on our waistlines.

There are some things that we can do to eat healthy and prevent weight gain while on vacation. These tips come from Penn State University Extension.

- Take an ice chest and pack it with resalable plastic bags full of healthy snacks including carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, grapes, oranges blueberries, 100 percent fruit and vegetable juices, string cheese, low-fat or nonfat yogurt. Plan to visit grocery stores on your trip to replenish you healthy snacks.

Be sure to pack plastic spoons and forks. Also include hand sanitizers to use before eating your snacks if you are not able to wash your hands.

- Take along a box of items that not need to be kept cool, but are just as healthy including canned tuna, fruit, cereal, crackers, dried fruit, popcorn, pretzels and nuts. For beverages, include canned or boxed 100 percent fruit juice and water.
- When you do eat at restaurants, review the menu. Stay away from fried foods and look for grilled, baked or broiled options. Select entrees such as seafood, chicken or lean meats. Select vegetable that are seasoned with herbs and spices rather than butter, cheese or sour cream.

Salads can be good choices, however, watch out for high-fat dressing, cheese, croutons and other toppings that can add fat and calories. Avoid biscuits, potpies, pastries and other breads that can be high in calories and fats. Select instead, hard rolls, bread sticks not brushed with butter, French bread or whole-wheat buns.

For sauces, tick to wine or thinned, stock-based sauces. Avoid thick butter sauces, creamy sauces and gravies.

- If the restaurant denotes “healthy” menu items, it is a good practice to choose from that list at least half the time.
- Consider ordering milk as a beverage if you are not getting much calcium, or stick to water, unsweetened tea or coffee.
- Try to order first so your choice won’t be influenced by everyone else at the table.
- Consider sharing an entrée with someone else that will help keep portions smaller.
- If you only have the choice of fast food, consider sandwiches with turkey or lean roast beef, salads or wraps. At burger places try a hamburger with apples or a side salad.

- Staying at a hotel that offers breakfast, choose options that are low in sugar and carbohydrates. Choose eggs if they are available, or choose yogurt, fresh fruit, juice or low-sugar, high fiber cereal.
- Strive to get some physical activity every day. When stopping, include walking or play a game. Take advantage of places that offer physical activity including swimming pools, walking trails and bike rentals.

You don't want to deprive yourself of special treats while on vacation. That's half the fun! The key is to enjoy them in moderation. Take smaller portions of the foods that have more calories and fat and be sure to consume more healthy foods.