

3 proven ways to hack your restaurant meal

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Several restaurant meals are notorious for sky-high sodium levels and are-you-kidding-me calories, but treating yourself to a meal out doesn't mean settling for poor nutrition. The American Heart Association shares three "eat smart" hacks in honor of World Hypertension Day.

Outsmarting eating out has gotten easier now that many restaurants offer better-for-you items, [calorie count on their menus](#) and access to detailed nutrition information upon request. Still, availability and knowledge are only part of the equation.

"The secret to eating smarter is translating your nutrition knowledge into behavior change. When it comes to eating out, making a healthy choice often requires a great deal of willpower. That's where some simple tips can really help," said Annessa Chumbley, registered dietician and American Heart Association [Healthy For Good](#) spokesperson.

The American Heart Association, the world's leading voluntary organization dedicated to building healthier lives free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke, asked volunteers to share hacks for "healthifying" [restaurant meals](#). Next time you eat out, try one of these winning hacks:

- Act like a kid – When child and adult menus have similar items, opt for the kid's size to get a smaller portion. Order a small salad with vinaigrette or a lemon wedge to complement your meal. – Submitted by Donna Bates, Atlanta, Ga.
- Be prepared –If you know you're going to eat out, visit the restaurant's website in advance, decide what you'll order and stick to your decision. – Submitted by John Katic, Perryopolis, Pa.
- Go first – When eating out with a group, order first so you aren't tempted by what someone else orders. You might even start a healthy ordering trend at your table. -Submitted by Deborah Peck, Ooltewah, Tenn.

"It's perfectly OK to think outside the menu," Chumbley said. "You are the paying customer and you deserve to choose health."

The American Heart Association recommends eating a variety of fruits

and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, skinless poultry and fish, nuts and legumes and non-tropical vegetable oils, while limiting red meat, sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages, sodium, saturated fat and trans fat.

More information: To learn more about eating smart when dining out, cooking in or snacking on the go, visit heart.org/eatsmart

Provided by American Heart Association

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