

From the AMA Alliance and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Fast Food Facts

For many people eating on the go is a great alternative for a busy lifestyle. But these types of foods often are high in calories, served in larger portions, full of flavor but low in nutritional value -- a luxury that can contribute to health problems and obesity.

Informed choices pertaining to away-from-home food could help reduce calorie over consumption, aid in weight management and increase energy.

Often, fast-food is something that is unavoidable, but with proper planning and educated decisions, it doesn't have to be as harmful as it is otherwise. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) created a guide to help in making good decisions when dining away from home.

Tips include:

- Patronize establishments that offer a variety of food choices and are willing to make substitutions or changes
- Look for lower-fat, lower calorie menu items such as those prepared steamed, broiled, baked, roasted, or poached rather than fried
- Treat this as an opportunity to eat more fruits and vegetables by ordering a vegetarian meal or substituting colorful vegetables for other side dishes
- Control food and beverage portions to make them appropriate for energy needs
- When eating out is a family affair, lay the groundwork for a lifetime of healthful eating by serving as a good role model for children and practicing healthy eating habits
- Reduce reliance on away-from-home food by packing healthy snacks to reduce the impulse visit to the vending machine

Click [here](#) for more information on the CDC's healthy eating on the go.

Environmental Factors Contribute to Obesity Prevalence Among Low-Income Children

A report from the CDC found that the prevalence of obesity among low-income children is widespread due environmental, social and educational factors.

According to the study, one of seven low-income, preschool-aged children is obese, but the obesity epidemic may be stabilizing. The prevalence of obesity in low-income, two-to-4-year-olds increased from 12.4 percent in 1998 to 14.5 percent in 2003, but rose to only 14.6 percent in 2008.

Participation in physical activity is important for children and teens as it has beneficial effects on weight, blood pressure and bone strength. Physically active children are also more likely to remain active throughout adolescence and possibly into adulthood. But, the environment within communities influences access to physical activity and affordable, healthy foods, and for children in low-income neighborhoods, the opportunity for physical activity and healthy foods may be limited due to a variety of reasons.

For example, a lack of sidewalks, safe bike paths and parks in neighborhoods can discourage children from walking or biking to school, as well as from participating in physical activity. Additionally, lack of access to affordable, good food choices in neighborhood food markets can be a barrier.

Click [here](#) for more information on this study.

Proximity of Fast Food Restaurants and Adolescent Obesity

For adolescents and teens, healthy eating is often determined by two factors -- convenience and proximity.

A recent report found that exposure to poor-quality food environments has important effects on adolescent eating patterns and weight. Policy interventions limiting the proximity of fast-food restaurants to schools could help reduce adolescent obesity.

According to the study conducted by the *American Journal of Public Health*, students who have fast-food restaurants within one half mile of their schools consumed fewer servings of fruits and vegetables, consumed more servings of soda and were more likely to be overweight or obese than were youths whose schools were not near fast-food restaurants. The result was unique to eating at fast-food restaurants compared with other nearby establishments.