

Low sodium eating at fast food restaurants

Can my child eat at fast food restaurants on a low sodium (salt) diet?

Yes, your child can eat at fast food restaurants if you follow these guidelines.

- Your child should only have between 1,000 and 2,000 milligrams (mg) of sodium each day.
- To stay on target, they should eat less than 500 mg sodium per meal (less than 20% daily value) and 100 to 200 mg sodium per snack (less than 9% daily value).
- Low sodium foods are less than 140 mg sodium per serving. Avoid adding salt to these foods.
- Sometimes, you may be able to ask for “no added salt.”

What breakfast foods are low in sodium?

Your child can try any of these:

- Scrambled eggs
- Unsalted hash browns
- Oatmeal
- English muffins
- Pancakes
- Yogurt
- Fruit cup

Your child should avoid biscuits and breakfast meats because they are very high in sodium.

What lunch and dinner foods are low in sodium?

Your child can try any of these:

Hamburgers

- Plain hamburgers are low in sodium.
- Toppings, such as cheese, pickles and special sauces, have a lot of sodium, so leave these off and order your child’s hamburgers without toppings.

Submarine (or sub) sandwiches

- Many meats on sub sandwiches are high in sodium.
- Your child can reduce the amount of sodium they get by ordering a mini-sub or leaving off pickles, cheese and sauces.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Low sodium eating at fast food restaurants, continued

Pizza

- Cheese and toppings can have a lot of sodium.
- Avoid toppings, such as pepperoni, sausage, ham, anchovies and olives.
- Choose low sodium toppings, such as onions, green peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, spinach and mushrooms.
- Also choose thin crust to reduce sodium.
- Stick to 1 to 2 slices, and have a salad or fruit on the side.

Chicken

- Grilled, baked and broiled chicken are low in sodium and fine for your child to eat.
- Fried chicken has added sodium in the batter. Since most of the sodium is in the skin, leave it off or limit your child to one piece.
- Sauce can also be a source of added sodium. Limit sauce to one packet or less.

Chinese food

- The sauces in Chinese food are most often high in sodium.
- Drain off any extra sauce.
- Do not use soy sauce even if it says reduced sodium.
- Order steamed rice, instead of fried rice since it is low in sodium.

Mexican food

- Most Mexican food is very high in sodium.
- Your child can eat tacos or a burrito bowl with toppings, such as fresh onion, lettuce, sour cream, diced tomatoes and bell peppers.
- Salad, rice, refried beans, guacamole and corn tortillas also tend to be low in sodium.
- Your child can use Tabasco sauce. However, other hot sauces are too high in sodium.

French fries or baked potato

- If your child does not have a potassium restriction, they can eat small size French fries without salt. Most restaurants will make them without salt when asked.
- Baked potatoes are also low in sodium. Add sour cream and chives to add some low sodium flavor.

Salads

- Salads without meat and side salads are low in sodium.
- Salad dressings can be very high in sodium, so stick to lite vinaigrettes.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Low sodium eating at fast food restaurants, continued

What drinks are low in sodium?

Your child can have water, soda, iced tea and 100% juice. If your child likes coffee, it is low in sodium – just do not add syrup or flavorings. Milk and milkshakes are a little higher in sodium, so only order small sizes of these drinks.

What desserts are low in sodium?

Your child can have frozen yogurt in a cup or cone, parfaits and cookies. Pies are high in sodium, so only eat half of a piece of pie. Choose small or child-sized desserts when possible.

Who should I call if I have questions about low sodium eating at fast food restaurants?

Call your child's nutritionist or doctor if you have questions.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.