

# Tips for Eating Out for People with Heart Failure

If you have heart failure and are planning to eat out at a restaurant, keep these suggestions in mind:

- 1. Plan ahead.** Try to select a restaurant where food is cooked to order, rather than a fast food or buffet-style chain where the food is made ahead of time. Many restaurants will honor requests for low-sodium (salt) and low-saturated and trans fat versions of certain dishes.
- 2. Get to know the owner and servers.** This will make it easier to ask questions.
- 3. Watch out for before-the-meal “extras.”** These include cocktails, appetizers, chips and bread. They’re often a source of extra calories and sodium.
- 4. Read the menu carefully.** Before ordering, ask how dishes are prepared. Look for foods described with these words and phrases, which usually indicate a healthier dish:
  - Baked
  - Broiled
  - Garden fresh
  - Grilled
  - In its own juice
  - Poached
  - Roasted
  - Steamed
- include a high-saturated fat sauce or salty seasoning. It’s OK to ask the waiter or waitress for help.
- 5. Have it your way.** Ask for your dish to be made without added salt or high-sodium ingredients, such as olives, pickles, bacon, MSG, or barbeque, soy, steak and Worcestershire sauces.
- 6. Avoid high-sodium foods.** Some common foods that can add the most sodium to your diet include sandwiches, burgers and tacos; rice, pasta and grain dishes; pizza; meat, poultry and seafood dishes; and soups.
- 7. Choose healthy ethnic foods.** People with heart failure don’t have to cut out world cuisines, such as Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Indian, Middle Eastern, Italian, French, Greek or Mexican. Just try to choose dishes that are lower in sodium and saturated fat. Ask your server for help.
- 8. Ask for salad dressings, sauces and gravies to be served on the side.** That makes it easier to control how much is added to the food.

Try to steer clear of dishes described with these terms, which usually indicate less-healthy preparation with higher amounts of saturated fat and sodium:

- Au gratin
- Buttered
- Buttery
- Casserole
- Creamed
- Crispy
- Escalloped
- Fried
- Hash
- Hollandaise
- In butter sauce
- In cheese sauce
- In cream sauce
- In gravy
- Pan-fried
- Pan-roasted
- Pot pie
- Prime
- Rich
- With bacon or sausage

Ask for more details about how food is prepared and cooked. For example, a food that looks acceptable because it’s baked or grilled might

## 9. Ask about healthy substitutions.

For example, if a dish comes with french fries or onion rings, ask for steamed vegetables or fresh salad instead. Choose desserts carefully. Fresh fruit, sugar-free fruit ice, sherbet and gelatin and angel food cake are good alternatives to high-calorie desserts. Use fat-free or low-fat milk in coffee instead of cream or half-and-half.

