



# A Fast-food World



by Tela Goodwin Mange

If you're dying for a hamburger, look for a restaurant that grills its meat.

Everyone wants to eat healthy, and we promise ourselves that we will tomorrow, but then we find ourselves in the fast-food line once again.

But there's hope.

Some fast-food companies are trying to include healthier choices in their menus. Greasy hamburgers and french fries remain the staples of fast-food life, but the restaurants are also offering choices with less fat content and fewer calories. Some convenience stores are selling top-quality fruits and vegetables, thus providing easy access to quick, light, nutritious meals.

"Fast-food restaurants are making attempts to accommodate special diets," says Mary E. Kopriva, a registered and licensed dietitian who is nutrition education coordinator for UT's Student Health Center.

Kopriva points to the McLean Deluxe — McDonald's reduced-fat burger made with a filler derived from seaweed — and to the

availability of grilled chicken sandwiches and salads at many fast-food restaurants as evidence that the restaurants are starting to look at the way Americans want to eat.

Fast-food restaurants usually cook with saturated fats such as beef fat and lard, plus sodium, because they're cheaper and usually make the food taste better than unsaturated fats such as sunflower oil or peanut oil. But saturated fats cause cholesterol problems and excessive sodium aggravates high blood pressure.

Kopriva suggests that you look for a place that sells grilled hamburgers rather than the "greasebombs" that are cooked in their own grease. Her advice: avoid breaded and fried items; hold the mayo and cheese on hamburgers; choose a salad with a reduced-calorie dressing, low-fat cottage cheese, or no dressing at all; cut french fries in favor of a baked potato with picante sauce, but no





### Think before you eat: A quick guide to fast food

The American Heart Association recommends a diet with a maximum of 30% of the calories derived from fat. Most fast-food items get 50% or more of their calories from fat, so be careful when you order. The numbers below are based on the average amount of fat and the caloric count in typical fast foods.

Food	% Fat	Fat (g)	Calories
Hamburger	39.4	14.3	522
Cheeseburger	43	20	421
French Fries	47.5	11.3	215
Fried Chicken Sand.	45	31.3	587
Ham & Cheese	45	21	437
Double Hamburger	43	30	520
Onion Rings	51.3	18	320
Cheese Pizza	52	15	579
Pepperoni Pizza	45	12	558
Chicken Nuggets	37	70	182
Beef Taco	53.4	9	192
Tostada	22	2	250
3 pc. Fish Dinner	7	13	225
Milkshake	51.7	2.6	47.4
Plain Baked Potato	20		
Chef Salad			
Side Salad			

Information courtesy the Health Education Department, UT Student Health Center.



butter or sour cream. (Picante sauce contains no fat.)

"Just because you eat 'healthily' doesn't mean you can't enjoy your food," Kopriva says. She suggests bringing a salad from home to eat with a slice of pizza or an apple for dessert after a hamburger to avoid the temptation of a scoop of ice cream. A piece of dried fruit, pretzels, and a diet cola or a glass of low-fat milk are wise alternatives to the junk food people usually choose to go with burgers.

"People just don't think about combining raisins with hamburgers," comments Kopriva, who is a strong believer in bringing a healthful lunch to work. She says it becomes a habit and doesn't take that much time. She often cooks an entire package of frozen vegetables and takes the leftovers to work as part of her lunch.

"Start with once a week and work up to

four or five times," she advises. "I realize that everybody has to eat out sometimes, but they can be more selective by choosing fast food with less fat."

Taking vitamins or other supplements isn't necessary, according to Kopriva. If you eat out frequently, however, you have to make an honest effort to eat foods from the vegetable, fruit, and milk groups on a daily basis, she says.

If you give in to your fast-food urge occasionally, you don't have to feel guilty. "There is no 'bad' food," the dietitian says, "but balance is important, and if you're having that stuff every day, you're not going to have a healthy lifestyle." Regular exercise helps lessen the ill effects of fast foods by increasing metabolism and burning off fats.

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If your main course is loaded with fat, an apple or a salad will help balance your meal.