Eating Smart While Dining Out

By: Rosalind Elemy, MS, RD, and Barbra Sassower, MPH, RD, CDE

During the past twenty years there has been a shift toward Americans eating more meals away from home. Concurrently, there has been a dramatic rise in the prevalence of obesity in the United States.About 65 percent of American adults meet the criteria for being overweight or obese. About 127 million adults in the United States are overweight, 60 million are obese, and 9 million are severely obese. The percentage of children and adolescents that are overweight or obese is higher than ever before in United States history. The problem isn't where Americans are eating, but what they are eating.

SMART FOOD CHOICES Find restaurants where food is prepared to order. Call ahead and ask about food preparation. If there is a restaurant or food chain you frequent, ask to see their nutritional information. You will often find it on the company's Web site. Watch portion sizes. Consider ordering an appetizer rather than a main entrée, splitting an entrée, or taking part of the meal home. Choose low fat cooking methods such as baked, broiled, grilled, steamed, roasted or poached. Skip over menu items that include words like "buttery," "creamy," "sautéed," "fried," "crispy" or "au gratin." Choose clear soups or soups with vegetables, beans and pasta. When ordering salad, choose no oil or low fat dressings, or try vinegar and lemon juice. Choose high fiber carbohydrates such as brown rice, oatmeal, whole grain bread, baked potatoes, corn tortillas, boiled beans or bean soup, salad, steamed vegetables and fresh fruits. If ordering pasta, try marinara sauce. It is low in fat. Avoid tortillas hand-made with flour and lard or oil. Avoid fried tortillas and fried tortilla chips. If ordering beans, request fresh (boiled), rather than refried. If ordering meat, choose dishes prepared with leaner meats. Remove the skin and trim all the visible fat.White meat turkey breast, without the skin, is a good choice for sandwiches — without the mayonnaise, of course. If eating at fast food restaurants, beware of cheese, sauces and "super-sizing." A double cheeseburger with sauce has a whopping 850 calories and more than 50 grams of fat, while a grilled chicken sandwich, without mayonnaise, has less than half the calories and about 7 grams of fat. Veggie burgers and bean burritos, without mayonnaise and cheese, are good low fat vegetarian choices. Skip the cheese, unless it is made from low fat or skim milk. Try a cheeseless pizza, topped with lots of vegetables. If you are watching your sodium intake, request the food be prepared without added salt and monosodium glutamate (MSG). For beverages, try sparkling water with a squeeze of lemon or lime. Avoid high calorie, alcoholic beverages. For dessert, try fresh fruit, sorbet or angel food cake.

Remember: It isn't where you eat, but what you eat that matters.

Healthy Living is a publication of Eisenhower Medical Center · © Copyright 2015 All Rights Reserved · www.emc.org