

# Fast Food Survival!

(Ron Jones, MS, ACSM Health/Fitness Instructor, Corporate Wellcoach)



“Don’t dig your own grave with your own knife and fork.”  
 --English Proverb

In our increasingly mobile society, the need for quick and easy meals has become a necessity for many people. While you should always try to eat higher quality home meals, an occasional fast food meal probably will be a reality for even the most stringent health-conscious person. Fast food in general is high in fat and low in nutritional value, but here are a few tips to make fast food dining healthier by reducing fat calories and focusing on the few “lower-fat” options that are available. For more information, please refer to my “References & Suggested Reading.”



<p><b>Caloric Values Per Gram</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Fat</u>=9 calories per gram</li> <li>• <u>Alcohol</u>=7 calories per gram</li> <li>• <u>Protein</u>=4 calories per gram</li> <li>• <u>Carbohydrate</u>=4 calories per gram</li> </ul>	<p><b>Determining Total Fat Calories (TFC)</b>  <i>“McDonald’s Super Size Fries”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fat=29 grams (610 total calories)</li> <li>• 29x9 calories/gram=261 fat calories</li> <li>• 261÷610=43% of calories is FAT!</li> </ul>
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## General Tips

- **Fried vs. Broiled or Grilled:** Eat broiled or grilled meats rather than fried. Many fats are lost when broiled or grilled as opposed to fried foods that are cooked in their own fat. Did you realize that deep fried chicken sandwiches are often higher in fat than regular fried hamburgers because the breaded chicken *absorbs fat* when submerged in the frying oil! If you want chicken, order it only when the broiled or grilled chicken breast is offered.
- **Eliminate Mayonnaise & “Secret Sauce”:** Mayonnaise is basically 100% fat and also *one of the primary ingredients in most secret sauces*. For example, a regular *Burger King “Whopper”* ordered without the mayo will eliminate 17 grams of fat. The 17 grams of fat accounts for a “whopping” extra 153 calories from mayo fat alone!
- **Cheese:** Using the above *Burger King “Whopper,”* if you also remove the cheese you eliminate another 17 grams of fat equaling 153 calories of fat. By asking to hold the mayo and cheese, you’ve saved yourself 306 calories of fat (34 grams) on one hamburger alone. Try using extra mustard or ketchup to replace the higher fat condiment options. \*Note: Some fast food restaurants now offer low or non-fat cheese and sour cream—there could be a minimal extra charge, but your health is worth it!

## \*Lower-Fat Fast Food Options

<p>*I tried to find items “lower” in fat than the average fast food. Being “lower” in fat still does not mean the item is truly “low-fat” by definition. Below are actual <b>food label definitions</b> that can be helpful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Low-Fat:</u> ≤ 3 grams of less fat per serving</li> <li>• <u>Reduced-Fat:</u> 25% less of a nutrient or of calories than the regular product</li> <li>• <u>Fat-Free:</u> &lt; 0.5 fat grams per serving</li> <li>• <u>Low-Calorie:</u> ≤ 40 calories per serving</li> <li>• <u>Light:</u> 1/3 fewer calories or ½ the usual fat</li> </ul>	<p>Adults need a minimum daily intake of 15-25 grams of fat (2,000 calories per day=60 grams of fat using the ≤ 30% recommendation below). Remember, fat is a necessary nutrient that is important for your body’s metabolism.          (Symbols: ≤=less than or equal to; &lt;=less than)</p> <p><b>% of Fat from Total Daily Calories (TDC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Total Fat:</u> ≤ 30% TDC</li> <li>• <u>Saturated Fat:</u> 7-10% TDC</li> <li>• <u>Polyunsaturated Fat:</u> ≤ 10% TDC</li> <li>• <u>Monounsaturated Fat:</u> ≤ 15% TDC</li> </ul>
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✓Carl's Jr: Lower-fat options are: "BBQ Chicken Sandwich" (3g fat/10% fat); "Sour Cream & Chive Baked Potato" (14g fat/29% fat); "Charbroiled Chicken Salad To Go" (7g fat/32% fat).

✓Jack in the Box: I had a hard time finding *lower-fat* options. Here are a few: "Regular Hamburger" (9g fat/32% fat); "Mexican Chicken Fajita Pita" (10g fat/28% fat); "Teriyaki Bowl w/Chicken" (4g fat/5% fat). **DO NOT EAT the Bacon Ultimate Cheeseburger!** This baby has **71 grams of fat, 1020 calories, and is 63% fat—yikes!** You might as well just have reverse liposuction! ☹

✓McDonald's: Lower-fat options are: "Regular Hamburger" (9g fat/30% fat); "McGrilled Chicken Sandwich w/o mayo" (7g fat/19% fat); "Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad" (2.5g fat/23% fat).

✓Taco Bell: They have started using low-fat and lard-free beans for their menu items. Lower-fat (but still NOT low-fat!) options are: "Bean Burrito"(5g fat/29% fat); "Grilled Chicken Burrito"(13g fat/30% fat); "Soft Chicken Taco"(7g fat/32% fat); "Lt. Soft Chicken Taco"(5g fat/25%); "Supreme Original Lt. Taco" (5g fat/28% fat). **DO NOT EAT the Taco Salad with the shell!** The shell is deep fried and soaked with fat! If you eat the "Taco Salad" and its shell you'll be eating 850 calories of which 55% are from fat alone (52 grams of fat!). If you want the salad, forget the shell and your body will be grateful.

✓Wendy's: They offer an array of baked potatoes with options. If you're conservative with the cheese and sour cream, you can get out of there with less fat than a typical hamburger. For example, the "Sour Cream & Chives Baked Potato" only has 6 grams of fat (14% fat) compared to *McDonald's* "Quarter Pounder" with cheese (30 fat grams) or the *Burger King* "Original Whopper" w/o cheese (31 fat grams). Other Lower-fat options are: "Chicken Fillet Only-Grilled" (3g fat/25% fat); "Grilled Chicken Sandwich" (8g fat/23% fat); "Grilled Chicken Caesar Salad" (9g fat/31% fat); "Broccoli & Cheese Baked Potato" (14g fat/27%).



Conclusion on Fast Food Restaurants: Many now offer items that are somewhat lower in fat and calories. Try to eat where low or non-fat cheeses and sour cream are offered. If low or non-fat is not an option, use regular cheese and condiments sparingly. Avoid fried foods! Beware of the "secret sauce." Add mustard (virtually 0 calories) or ketchup (tomatoes with sugar) for extra flavor to replace missing secret sauce.

**Remember...Super-Sized Meals=Super-Sized Butts! NOT Good!**

\*References & Suggested Reading

\*Bellerson, Karen J. (2001). *The complete and up-to-date fat book*. New York, NY: Avery.

\*Clark, Nancy. (1997). *Sports nutrition guidebook: eating to fuel your active lifestyle*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Schlosser, Eric. (2001). *Fast food nation: the dark side of the All-American meal*. New York, NY: Perennial.

\*Websites: USDA Food Database ([www.nal.usda.gov/fnic](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic)); & [www.nutrition.gov](http://www.nutrition.gov).

\* Ron Jones (9.7.07)

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