

10 tips
Nutrition
Education Series

be choosy in the dining hall



10 tips for healthy eating in the dining hall

Dining halls are full of healthy food options. You just need to know which foods to put on your tray. Use these tips to plan your food choices and know which options are best for you.

1 know what you're eating

Many dining halls post menus with nutrition information. Look at the menus ahead of time, so you can be ready to create healthy, balanced meals when you get there. Having a plan is the first step in making smarter eating decisions! Visit ChooseMyPlate.gov to find information and tools like SuperTracker to help you make meal selection a breeze.

2 enjoy your food, but eat less

Everybody loves the all-you-can-eat dining hall! To resist the urge of eating too much, take smaller portions and use a smaller plate. Remember you can always go back if you are still hungry.

3 make half your grains whole grains!

Whether you're at the sandwich station or pouring yourself a bowl of cereal in the morning, make the switch to whole grains like 100% whole-grain bread and oatmeal.



4 re-think your drink

Americans drink about 400 calories every day. Consider how often you drink sugary beverages such as sodas, cappuccinos, energy drinks, fruit beverages, sweetened teas, and sports drinks. Drinking water instead of sugary beverages can help you manage your calories.

5 make half your plate fruits and veggies

Fruits and veggies can make your meals more nutritious, colorful, and flavorful. Add to pastas, eggs, pizza, sandwiches, and soups. Try spinach in a wrap or add pineapple to your pizza.



6 make it your own!

Don't feel like you have to choose pre-made plates. Design your own meal! Fresh veggies from the salad bar can be thrown into your omelet for brunch, or grab some tofu on your way to the pasta station for lean protein.

7 slow down on the sauces

Sauces, gravies, and dressings tend to be high in fat and sodium. Watch out for foods prepared with a lot of oil, butter, or topped with heavy condiments, such as mayonnaise. You don't have to do away with sauces and condiments all together; just ask for less or put them on the side. Reducing extras will help you manage your weight.

8 be on your guard at the salad bar

Most veggies get the green light but limit foods high in fat and sodium such as olives, bacon bits, fried noodles, croutons, and pasta or potato salads that are made with mayo and oil. Stick to fat-free or low-fat dressings on the side.



9 make dessert special

Save dessert for a Friday night treat or on special occasions. When you can't resist, opt for something healthy, such as a fruit and yogurt parfait.

10 don't linger

Dining halls should be just that, where you eat. Although it's great to chat with friends while you eat, avoid staying for long periods of time to reduce your temptation to keep eating.