

General restaurant and takeaway tips

For outlets not covered by sector specific advice eg cafes, pubs, Mexican restaurants

Healthier eating is becoming more and more important to customers¹³. Here are some practical healthier catering suggestions for you to consider to help support your customers with a healthier lifestyle.

Try to achieve as many tips as possible. ☒ Tick the box when you have achieved each tip and try to add a new tip every month. You may already be achieving several of these tips but be prepared to go further and make real changes to help your customers stay healthy.

PORTION SIZE – Eating too many calories can lead to obesity, which in turn increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Even small reductions at each meal can make a real difference.

1. Think about the size of your portions and if you're being too generous. **Have a set portion for each ingredient** (eg a certain size of scoop/spoon, or a fixed number of slices/pieces) and ask staff to keep to these portion sizes to provide consistency for your customers – this could help you save money. ☐
 2. Make **small portions** or children's portions available and market these to everyone. ☐
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FATS AND FRYING – High-fat foods contain lots of calories, which can lead to weight gain. This in turn can lead to diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Reducing saturated fat intakes can lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease.

3. Use a **healthier oil for frying like rapeseed or sunflower oil** as these contain less saturated fat. ☐
 4. **Use lean mince** or drain off the fat, **trim excess fat from meat and remove skin from chicken** whenever possible. ☐
 5. **Offer to grill or bake food instead of frying** (eg grilled fish, bacon and sausages) and consider **making that the default** cooking option. ☐
Make this option clear on your menu and train your staff to offer this option. Some customers do prefer it and it's healthier!
 6. Make sure you **use lower fat varieties or smaller amounts of these products:** ☐
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¹³ See www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/39132/attitudes-to-obesity.pdf and www.gov.uk/government/news/new-change4life-campaign-encourages-parents-to-be-food-smart

- **cheese** (swap to reduced-fat hard cheese or a cheese naturally lower in fat, like Edam) or use less hard cheese
- **cream** (try single instead of double cream, half-fat crème fraîche or better still, lower fat plain yoghurts)
- **milk** (use skimmed, 1% fat, or semi-skimmed as a default)
- **butter/spreads** (use low or reduced fat spreads or use far less butter)
- **yoghurt** (choose low fat or fat free natural yoghurts)
- **mayonnaise** (swap to light mayonnaise – it has up to 60% less fat!)
- **dressings** (choose light varieties or use less oil in homemade dressings)

If you need to deep fat fry, for the best results:

7. Ensure the oil is heated to the **correct temperature (160-165°C if you have a high efficiency fryer, or 180°C if you have a traditional fryer, for chips)**. Too low and it will absorb too much fat, too high and it will spoil your oil. ☐
 8. **Avoid frying food more than once** – par-frying, double or triple cooking and reheating food in oil increases the fat content of the food. **Bang, shake and drain off any excess fat**, this can reduce fat absorption by 20%. ☐
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SALT – It is important to reduce your salt intake as too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and an increased risk of stroke and heart disease.

9. **Consider removing salt from tables** and counters and provide it to customers only on request. Many businesses are already doing this. People sometimes add salt out of habit without thinking or tasting the food. ☐
 10. **Add less salt and salty ingredients to meals over time**. Ingredients like stock, ketchup, mustard, gravy, seasoning packets, and soy sauce can contain a lot of salt so be careful how much you use. Customers won't notice if you do this gradually. Try adding a little less each week until you can avoid adding it altogether. You could also try to procure reduced salt versions of these products (eg stock preparations below 0.6g salt/100ml). Careful not to add sugar instead. ☐
 11. **Do not add salt when boiling rice, pasta, potatoes or vegetables**. ☐
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SUGAR – Eating too many foods and drinks high in sugar can contribute to excess calories and lead to weight gain, which in turn increases the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. It is also linked to tooth decay.

12. **Offer healthier drinks as the default option** – such as water, lower fat milks, low calorie or no added sugar drinks, or pure fruit juices (in a 150ml serving size or as close to this volume as possible), rather than sugary drinks. Display these at eye level where appropriate. ☐

If you do offer dessert either offer fresh fruit without sugar or syrup, or desserts that are lower in fat and sugars, offer smaller portion sizes. Or choose desserts that meet the **sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines**.

FRUIT, VEGETABLES AND FIBRE – These are low in calories and good sources of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre. Eating plenty of them will help to promote digestive health and can help prevent heart disease, stroke and some cancers.

- 13. Always **include at least one portion of vegetables (80g) as part of a meal.** ☐
 - 14. If **you offer meal deals or special offers include a starchy carbohydrate (eg potatoes, bread, rice or pasta with no added fat), vegetables or salad, and one portion of fruit** (a piece of fruit or a fruit salad) instead of promoting less healthy snacks like crisps, chocolate, chips etc. The fruit can be fresh, canned in fruit juice, dried or frozen. ☐
 - 15. Look across your menu and think about **where you could add more vegetables and/or pulses to as many dishes as possible** (while not adding more fat, sugar or salt), for example soups, stews and rice. They are usually cheaper than meat and fish so could save you money, and will increase the fibre content of dishes. ☐
 - 16. Make sure wholegrain or higher fibre carbohydrates (eg **wholemeal bread, wholewheat pasta and brown rice**) are options on your menu and **promoted as the default option.** ☐
 - 17. Offer **fruit salad** or fruit platter on your dessert menu or fruits like melon or figs as part of a starter. The fruit can be fresh, canned in fruit juice, dried or frozen. ☐
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PROMOTE HEALTHIER OPTIONS although it is important to improve the nutrient content of all menu items you can additionally develop promotions to give a unique selling point and encourage customers to pick a healthier meal or snack to eat.

- 18. **Promote healthier options with more fruit and vegetables.** You do not necessarily have to advertise them as healthier but study your menu and make sure the healthier items stand out and are good value. Do not offer discounts and special deals for food or drinks that are low in fibre and high in fat, salt or sugar (eg deep fried foods, salty foods like bacon, and sugary desserts or snacks). ☐
- 19. If you offer **meal deals** this is a great way to get your customers to try healthier dishes and options. Offer healthier drinks and include a starchy carbohydrate (eg potatoes, bread, rice or pasta with no added fat), vegetables or salad. Where desserts are offered offer those lower in fat and sugars, offer smaller portion sizes, or replace with fruit options. See the **sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines**. ☐

PROCURING HEALTHIER INGREDIENTS AND FOOD PRODUCTS FROM SUPPLIERS

20. **Check the nutrition information** about the foods and drinks you buy in and choose options with higher fibre and less salt, sugar and fats, for example bread, bacon, sausages, cheese, ham, ready meals, desserts and drinks. Use the following link for advice on how to read food labels: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/food-labelling.aspx> Your supplier may be able to assist you. To check against the sugar reduction and calorie or portion size guidelines see www.gov.uk/government/collections/sugar-reduction. □
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