

What You Don't Know Could Hurt You

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Whether listed on the menu or not, the American Diabetes Association provides tips for translating calorie information

Pop quiz -- which has more calories -- a tuna salad sandwich or a roast beef with mustard? You might be surprised to learn the tuna fish salad normally has at least twice the number of calories. But what does this mean for your daily diet? And how many calories a day are you supposed to eat anyway?

Counting calories, whether in the kitchen or at a restaurant, is important to maintaining or losing weight according to the American Diabetes Association (ADA). Consuming excess calories without increased physical activity can lead to weight gain, a major risk factor for pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes which affects nearly one in four Americans. In addition, people with diabetes and those at risk for diabetes need to work toward achieving a healthy weight to prevent deadly diabetes complications, such as heart disease and stroke.

"It is easy to underestimate the number of calories in food items, especially in a restaurant where you didn't prepare the meal yourself," commented Ann Albright, PhD, President, Health Care & Education, American Diabetes Association. "Since Americans are eating out more, they are receiving more of their calories via restaurant meals. People need to be well informed to make healthier choices."

Yesterday a federal court upheld a New York City regulation, which ADA supports, that requires chain restaurants to provide the calorie content of foods on their menus and menu boards. This ruling came in response to a challenge to the regulation filed by the New York State Restaurant Association.

ADA will host a live web chat "Tips, Tactics, and Tools for Healthier Restaurant Eating" on Tuesday, May 6, with ADA author Hope S. Warshaw, RD. Visit www.diabetes.org/adalive/default.jsp for more information or to submit a question ahead of time.

According to the ADA, the first step to making healthy choices is knowing how many calories a day to consume. The daily calorie ranges below are a general guide. Talk to your health care team about your specific dietary goals.

- 1,200-1,400 calories/day - Women who want to lose weight, are small in size, and/or are sedentary
- 1,400-1,600 calories/day - Women who are older and smaller, are larger and want to lose weight, and/or are sedentary
- 1,600-1,900 calories/day - Women who are moderate to large size, men who are older, are small to moderate size and want to lose weight
- 1,900-2,300 calories/day - Children, teen girls, women who are larger in size and active, men who are small to moderate size and are at desired body weight
- 2,300-2,800 calories/day - teen boys and men who are active and moderate to large in size

In addition, the ADA offers healthy tips for eating out:

- Doggie bag - If the portion is more than you usually eat, split it with a friend or take half home for later.
- Snack time - If you had a lower calorie option for lunch, grab a healthy snack mid-afternoon, such as an apple or a handful of nuts, to avoid binging later in the day.
- Want a drink? - Substitute 16 oz. of water for 16 oz. of soda. This will save you approximately 200 calories.
- Hold, please - Skip the mayo and other fatty sides, which can save you hundreds of calories.
- On the side - Rather than putting the dressing in the salad or sauces on the entree, try dipping your fork in the dressing or sauce before putting a bite on your fork.
- Made to Order - Ask if meats or fish can be grilled instead of fried. Order an extra vegetable instead of a starch as a side.

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