

Nutrition & Health News

JR Lowell Elementary School Parent and Child Wellness Newsletter
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Fast Food

America has been called a "fast food nation" and for good reason. Everyday, one out of four Americans eats fast food. If you are eating out, fast food restaurants are often the cheapest option, but unfortunately, not usually the healthiest one. Eating just one fast food meal can pack enough calories, sodium and fat for an entire day, but the quick-and-cheap temptation can be hard to resist.

However, as an informed consumer, you can make healthier choices and still enjoy the convenience of fast food restaurants. Find out what you have been eating at fast food restaurants. Fastfood.org has the nutrition facts for over 650 menu items from the most popular fast food restaurants.

Remember, there is no such thing as a "bad" food. All foods can fit into a healthy meal plan. It's true that fast food is usually high in fat, calories, cholesterol, and sodium, but eating fast food every once in a while is ok. If you eat too much fast food over a long period of time, though, it can lead to health problems.

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Try to balance fast food with other nutritious foods throughout the day and make healthier choices whenever possible. There are many healthy food choices that are easily available, tasty, and don't cost very much that can be eaten on the go or at home.

Did You Know.....

- ... French fries are originally from Belgium, not France.
- ... China is the 2nd largest fast food market after the United States.
- ... 40% of American meals are eaten outside the home.

From the Nurse's Desk..... By Mrs. Taverna

Numerous studies have been completed on fast food, kids, obesity and advertising. When people are told that fast food is not good for them from a nutritional point of view, they are hardly surprised. The relationship between fast food and the obesity epidemic is a well known fact. Still, fast food is so popular that the majority of the population ignores the obvious risk of poor nutrition and weight problems. Fast food is easily available, relatively cheap, most people find it tasty and filling and it can be purchased fast.

Fats, sugar and salt in fast foods draws kids like a magnet because it appeals to children's taste. Fast food is also low in fiber, so kids don't fill up after a meal, making them eat more later.

Large portion sizes in fast food restaurants further contribute to overeating and obesity. One small serving of French fries consists of 10 medium fries,

about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 2.25 oz. amounting to 230 calories. Nearly half of these calories are from fat. Try this as a learning/teaching moment with your child.

Have the child count out the fries (knowing that 10 is a portion size). Double that amount (large size of fries) and your child is having 500 calories from the fries **alone**.

- Children 4-6 years of age recommended daily caloric intake is 1800.
- Children 7-10 years of age recommended daily caloric intake is 2000.

The effects of fast food pose potential damage to human health. Some of the problems are:

- Increased blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Increased obesity
- Diabetes, Stroke and Heart Disease.



Fast Food Alternatives

It's late, your kids are hungry, and you don't have time to cook. You can rustle up a number of fast-food alternatives in minutes. Not only can you put together a faster, healthier meal -- with fewer calories and less fat and sodium -- but you can save money, too.

- **Planning helps you pull your own fast-food act together. Get out the calendar and figure out your food needs for the week ahead. Make a quick list. Consider stocking:**
 - *Whole-grain breads and cereals, pasta, and prepared pizza crust, *Milk, reduced-fat shredded cheese, eggs, canned tuna, canned beans, tomato sauce, peanut butter, lean ground beef patties, chicken, and meatballs, *Fresh, frozen, or no-added-salt canned vegetables; fresh and dried fruit; and fruit canned in juice, *Quick-cooking grains such as 10-minute brown rice and whole-wheat couscous, *Cartons of 100% orange juice, milk, yogurt, applesauce and peanut butter, in your fridge and cabinets. (These work great for road trips, too.)
- **Just a couple of hours spent cooking main courses one or two weekends a month works wonders for whipping up fast and healthy food on hectic weeknights. Tips to try:**
 - Let your slow cooker save you time. Throw the ingredients for chili or beef stew in and turn to other activities. Roast a chicken or turkey. Leftovers can be used for another meal. Put together a pan or two of lasagna. Make double batches of anything you cook, and freeze half.
- **Sandwiches can help you get supper on the table super fast. For tasty fast-food alternatives, try:**
 - Pre-formed lean beef burger patties or veggie burgers. Serve on whole-grain buns. Pair with cooked frozen carrots and peas; fruit; and milk. Barbecue pulled pork served on whole grain buns with corn and fruit on the side. Tuna melts with reduced-fat cheese on whole-wheat bread, and salad. Quesadillas made with low-fat cheese, fat-free refried beans, and leftover chicken served with a green salad.



Smart Eating on the Go Strategies

Eating at a fast food restaurant may be easier than you think **IF** you make good choices.

Sandwiches: Look for these words: **regular, small, junior** size or single burger and ask for a whole wheat bun if available. Try ketchup, mustard or BBQ sauce on your burger instead of mayo. Bacon, cheese and sour cream add lots of calories and fat. Ask for pickles, lettuce, tomato and onions for some extra veggies!

Chicken is a healthy choice—choose baked or broiled over fried. Ask for special sauces and mayo on the side or order without!

Roast beef sandwiches, soft shell tacos with veggies and sub sandwiches can be healthy choices too.

Fries: Serving sizes of French fries have gotten much larger and people are eating more than they used to! Order the smallest size fries or split them with a friend. Or, instead of fries, get a kid's meal with apples or Mandarin oranges.

Salads: Go for the greens! Add a fresh salad with carrots, peppers and tomatoes. Choose lite or low fat salad dressings. Ask for the dressing on the side or if it comes in packets, use less than 1/2 of the packet or try a twist of fresh lemon.

Pizza: Order thin crust pizza and ask for "1/2 the cheese" on top, try veggies instead of meat.

Drinks: Choose low fat milk—either white or chocolate, water or 100% juice instead of soda. A 12-ounce can of soda has 10 teaspoons sugar.

Meal combos and value meals are typically high in fat and short on fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Many fast food restaurants have a chart on the wall with the nutrition information or a brochure to take home. **Make informed healthy choices!**

Physical Activity of the Month

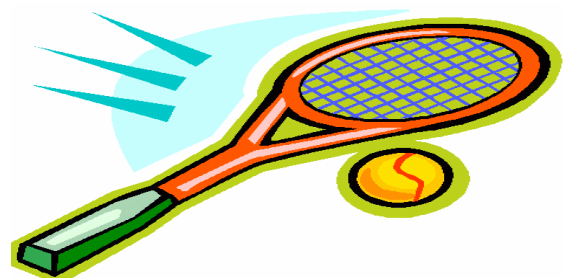
Lowell Physical Education teachers
Ms. Pagliuca and Ms. Donahue
present some physical activities to
experience:

After enjoying that yummy meal from your favorite fast-food restaurant, did you ever think about the amount of calories that you are putting into your body and the amount of exercise you would have to do to burn those calories? For example, a child's plain hamburger meal, which has a small coke and small fry, has 550 calories. What types of exercise do you have to do to burn 550 calories?

Here are just a few activities and the amount of time that it would take to burn those 550 calories:

- Medium paced jog for more than one hour
- 1 hour of Wii boxing
- 1 ½ hours of Wii tennis
- 2 hour basketball game with friends
- 1 ½ hours of jumping rope
- Intense biking for more than one hour
- Uphill hiking for more than an hour

Even though eating your favorite fast-food meal may have a lot of calories and may take a lot of exercise to work these calories off, eating these meals once in a while is all right. A great idea to remember is your portion size. Usually most people are satisfied after just having a taste of something yummy, instead of having a lot!



Physical Activity Word Find

Find the following fun activities that can help keep you healthy!

jump rope

tennis

running

jogging

walking

swimming

bicycling

dancing

hiking

basketball

soccer

volleyball

H	I	F	C	Q	E	J	G	O	O	G	P	K	X	A	N
I	A	P	W	S	H	S	U	S	E	I	I	T	N	R	M
K	V	J	U	M	P	R	O	P	E	O	G	A	L	U	T
I	O	W	S	M	K	U	F	O	E	A	G	A	O	N	A
N	B	A	S	K	E	T	B	A	L	L	N	N	S	N	D
G	E	L	I	C	O	T	T	A	R	U	I	C	R	I	U
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N	E	R	N	I	A	N	A	S	P	Z	R	A	O	N	V
G	L	T	G	N	I	R	I	T	M	U	A	R	P	Y	N
M	L	G	Z	A	R	E	L	S	A	N	J	I	S	G	E
B	O	C	B	S	Q	F	U	C	O	O	Y	E	E	B	R
J	V	B	R	Q	K	A	P	I	G	N	I	C	N	A	D

Fast Food Safety Tips

Food poisoning is one of today's most visible fast food scares. Food poisoning has two common causes: unsanitary cooking conditions and improperly cooked food. Bacteria thrives in unclean facilities and can quickly spread between the temperatures of 40 degrees and 140 degrees Fahrenheit, which is why most health food inspectors emphasize the necessity for proper sanitation procedures and the right internal food temperatures for fried and grilled foods. Simple observation can help consumers avoid this notorious fast food danger.

- Go inside the restaurant to check for general cleanliness. An unclean restaurant (dirty floors and tables, unsanitary restrooms, unpleasant smells, etc.) may indicate a greater likelihood of dangerously unclean cooking conditions.
- Employees should be dressed properly (including hair nets, gloves, and other protective clothing when necessary), have clean hands and fingernails, and be attentive to their jobs. If the employees don't care about how they look or act in front of customers, how can they care about the food they cook and serve?
- Wash your hands before eating. Many suspected cases of food poisoning are caused by the patrons rather than the food itself. Keep anti-bacterial foams, gels, or wipes available before eating drive thru meals and be sure to wash thoroughly before handling any food.
- Eat food while still hot. Once food cools, bacteria can multiply at an extraordinary rate. Do not order fast food meals and then drive home for a half hour before eating. If a delay is inevitable, reheat the food to a safe temperature before eating.

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This issue and past issues are now available on the JR Lowell School website under News and Events!

References

Kansas State University Research and Extension, USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Dietary Guidelines, USDA's MyPyramid, Understanding Nutrition, WebMD, The Children's Health Fund, Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Blogs.sun.com(Image), Helpguide.org, ochealthinfo.com, Children's Hospital Boston's Center for Young Women's Health