

Restaurant food is often at least as unhealthy as fast food

By ACSH Staff — July 20, 2015



[1]A [new study](#) [2] published in the *European Journal of Clinical*

Nutrition found that eating at a full-service restaurant is no better for your health than eating at a fast food joint. In fact, in some cases, a full-service restaurant is less healthy.

The study, led by Ruopeng An, Ph.D. at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Department of Kinesiology and Community Health, included data on over 18,000 adults aged 18 and older from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey collected from 2003-2010. The adults included in the study were asked to describe the meals they consumed in the preceding 24 hours. Outcomes included daily intake of total calories and 24 nutrients of public health concern.

Dr. An found that while people who ate at restaurants took in more nutrients including vitamins (B6, E, K, copper and zinc), potassium, and omega-3 fatty acids than those who ate at home or at fast food restaurants, they also scored the worst on cholesterol and sodium intake. Restaurant meals contained on average 58 mg of extra cholesterol compared to home-cooked meals, and an extra 10 mg compared to fast food meals. Restaurant food contained on average 412 mgs of extra sodium a day compared to home-cooked meals, while fast food contained an extra 200 mg more.

Additionally, fast food and restaurant diners consumed about 10 grams of fat more than those who ate home-cooked meals. Fast food was the worst option when it came to fat intake fast food diners consumed about 3.49 grams more saturated fat than those who ate at home, compared to 2.46 grams for restaurant diners. Fast food was the worst option for overall calorie intake as well: fast food consumption was associated with a net increase of 190 calories compared to eating at home, while restaurant consumption was associated with a 187 calorie increase.

By a significant margin, the healthiest dining option was to eat at home. Even ordering meals at restaurants, then eating them at home made for a healthier option. Dr. An hypothesized that eating at a restaurant is often a social event with more time spent eating.

These findings reveal that eating at a full-service restaurant is not necessarily healthier than eating at a fast-food outlet, [An said](#) [3]. In fact, you may be at higher risk of overeating in a full-service restaurant than when eating fast food. My advice to those hoping to consume a healthy diet and

not overeat is that it is healthier to prepare your own foods, and to avoid eating outside the home whenever possible.

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[3] http://news.illinois.edu/news/15/0701foodout_ruopengan.html