Progressive

Six food swaps that will help you eat healthier on the road

The trucker's guide of what to eat at rest stops By Drew Bonsky, physician's assistant at the Progressive Health Clinic

It can be a challenge to eat healthy when you are on the road most of the day. Often times, rest stops are the only option for food, and they don't always have the best spread of healthy choices. However there are some small changes you can make that will go a long way. With just a few easy swaps, you can be on the right track to a healthier diet.

- Rethink your drink — Choose water, NOT soda.

  Soda is essentially empty calories. By cutting soda out of your diet and replacing it with water, there will be countless health benefits. Also, by drinking a glass of water before a meal, you will be apt to eat less than you normally would. If water is too plain for your palette, try adding in some lemon or lime. Or, start off slow, and cut the calories by ordering the small soda instead of the large.

- Lighten the load — Choose a grilled or baked sandwich, NOT a personal pan pizza or fried sandwich.

  Personal pizzas may sound small, but looks can be deceiving, with some packing 750 or more calories. The same goes for fried chicken. By switching to a veggie, grilled or baked chicken, or turkey sandwich, it lightens the calorie intake. Try choosing a whole wheat, or whole grain bread, and swap out mayo for something a little more nutritious, like hummus or mustard.

- Switch your sweets — Choose dried fruit and unsalted nuts, NOT candy bars or potato chips.

  While everyone has a sugary craving from time to time, eating some dried fruit and nuts will not only satisfy that craving, but will help you avoid crashing from all of the sugar found in candy bars. It will also help provide a good source of protein. Don't go overboard, the calories in these can add up, but it's a much healthier option than a candy bar.

- Find a better breakfast — Choose low sugar energy bars, NOT packaged muffins.

  Though muffins may be tasty, they are loaded with fats and sugars. Switching to a granola or other low sugar energy bars can help you feel fuller longer. Be sure to check the nutrition facts — some granola bars are actually very high in sugar and calories.

- Paint your plate with color — Choose colorful fruits and veggies, NOT fried sides.

  Adding color to your plate usually means the addition of things like carrots, broccoli and other veggies. Picking those sides instead of fries or onion rings is a decision you won't regret later. You'll get more essential vitamins into your system and feel less run-down from your meal.

- Watch for portion distortion — Choose small orders, NOT large orders.

  This can refer to anything, especially sides like fries or mashed potatoes. While its recommend to switch out fried items entirely when possible, if you are going to grab fries, you can save yourself a lot of calories by just cutting back. Snagging a small fry instead of a large can save you 200-300 calories and 10-15 grams of fat.

If you begin making small changes, like these simple swaps, to your diet, you will be on the road to a healthier you in no time! It's not easy at first, but each choice is a small victory for your wellness.

Drew Bonsky is a physician's assistant at the Progressive Health Clinic and leads the Nutrition Wellness Team at Progressive.Progressive, in business since 1937, is a market leader in commercial auto insurance and the #1 truck insurer.

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