

Takeaways – Damage limitation

There is no denying that takeaway food is popular – 55% of the UK population report regularly or occasionally eating a takeaway and as a nation we spend £1.4 billion per year on takeaway food. Thus their contribution to our overall nutritional intake and general health cannot be underestimated.

Without meaning to generalise, most takeaway food is staggeringly high in calories, high in fat, high in saturated fat, high in salt, low in fibre and low in vitamins and minerals.

With the rising trend in obesity and other related health problems, it is easy to see that regular consumption of takeaway food will support expanding waistlines and help to clog arteries.

Avoiding takeaway food altogether is the ideal. But this is an unrealistic option for some people. Try keeping takeaway food as an occasional treat, one per month, rather than a regular substitute for home cooked food.

If you do opt to have a takeaway here is a guide to the baddies and the alternatives to consider:

Type	The Baddies	The alternatives
Chinese	Anything deep fried or battered e.g., battered pork in sweet and sour sauce, prawn toast, fried rice, fried noodles. Spare ribs. Duck dishes. Meat with visible fat and poultry with skin on. Prawn crackers.	Stir-fried vegetables (with or without chicken, bean curd or prawns), chop suey, beef or chicken with green peppers, steamed/ boiled rice and noodles.
Indian	Any curries with cream e.g. tikka masala and passanda. Beef, lamb and duck dishes. Anything fried/deep fried e.g., bhajis, samosa. Pilau rice, nann bread, pappadums and pickles.	Balti curries, curries with a tomato based sauce e.g., doupiaza, madras. Choose chicken or prawn dishes, tandoori chicken, plain boiled rice, lentil dhal, plain chapatti without fat.
Pizza	Deep pan and stuffed crusts. Toppings: salami, pepperoni, other processed meats, extra cheese. Garlic bread.	Thin n' crispy base. Toppings: mushrooms, tuna, ham, chicken, pineapple, tomato chunks, peppers, sweetcorn. Ask for less cheese.
Fish and chips	Only eat the fish – leave the batter. Anything else battered e.g., sausage, fritter. Pies and pasties. Taste food before adding salt.	Always have a portion of peas or beans. Have a smaller portion of chips and include some unbuttered bread.
Thai	Red, green or yellow curries. Duck dishes. Anything deep fried e.g., spring rolls, prawn toast. Spare ribs. Sticky rice, fried rice or noodles.	Steamed dim sum, plain steamed/boiled rice, stir-fried or steamed vegetable/ chicken/prawn/ bean curd dishes.

The bottom line is:

- Always try to include plenty of vegetables and fruits – these should make up about half of your meal
- Starchy foods should make up about a third of your meal – ideally these should be wholegrain or wholemeal varieties with no added fat.

- Lean protein foods should make up the remainder – chicken, fish, seafood, bean curd, lentils and beans with visible fat/skin removed (where appropriate) and cooked with as little fat as possible.