



# Are Sub Shops Really a Healthier Fast Food Option?

Ever since Jared shed over 200 pounds by eating Subway® sandwiches, sub shops have gained a reputation for being a healthier fast food option compared to burger joints. However, are they really a healthier option? Can fast food really help you reach and keep a healthy bodyweight?

## Canadians Love Their Fast Food

Canadians tend to eat fast food a lot. In an *Overview of Canadian Eating Habits* (2006), 25% of adults and kids ate at a fast food outlet the day before they were interviewed. This included 39% of 19 to 30 year old males, just less than 30% of 31 to 50 year olds, and 21% of 9 to 13 year olds.

## The Trouble with Fast Food

No one will argue that fast food is quick and convenient, but will it help you lose weight? Probably not. In fact, while some choices are healthier options than others, most fast food meals are high in saturated fat, sodium, calories, and sugar. As well, portion sizes at fast food restaurants have increased over the years, making them even more harmful to our health.

In a 2005 study in the *Lancet*, adults who ate fast food more often had a higher bodyweight. In another 2005 study published in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health* (2005), children who ate at a fast food restaurant more than once a week had a 56% greater chance of having a lower quality diet, which can affect their growth, health, and school performance.

## Aren't Sub Shops Healthier Than Other Fast Food Restaurants?

How healthy your meal is depends on what you order, whether eating at a sub shop or burger joint. Some subs can be just as high in fat, calories, and sodium as a burger or a taco. Cookies and chips, which are available at sub shops, can be just as high in fat and sodium as French fries. Take a look at this example comparing Value Meals at Subway® and McDonald's®:

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As you can see, not every choice at a sub shop is a healthier option. Don't go run out and grab a burger and fries though. In both cases, these meals provide about half a day's worth of calories, over 2/3 of a day's worth of fat, and almost a 100% of the daily recommendation for sodium.

Subway®	CALORIES	FAT (g)	SODIUM (mg)
6 inch Meatball Sub (with Swiss cheese)	610	28	1625
2 chocolate chip cookies	420	20	300
Coke®, regular	273	0	26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1303</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>1951</b>

McDonald's®	CALORIES	FAT (g)	SODIUM (mg)
Big Mac®	540	28	1090
French fries, medium	360	17	280
Coke®, medium	220	0	19
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1120</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>1379</b>



## KEEPING IT HEALTHIER AT SUB SHOPS

A few simple guidelines can help you to choose healthier items at sub shops. Pick things that are lower in fat, sugar, sodium, and calories, and higher in fibre. Here are some tips:

### Watch portion sizes

A 6 inch sub is half as big as a 12 inch sub, which means it will have half the calories, fat, and sodium.

### Choose lean meats

If you can see the fat on a piece of meat such as bacon or salami, then it's higher in fat. Meatballs and steak are also higher fat choices. Stick to grilled chicken, turkey, ham, and roast beef. *The meat on a 6 inch assorted cold cut sub, which has salami, can have 150 more calories and 15 g more fat than the meat on a turkey sub.*

### Limit the cheese

While cheese does have some nutrition value, it is also higher in fat. Canada's Food Guide recommends that people choose lower fat cheeses. These are rarely offered at fast food restaurants. *The cheese on most 6 inch subs adds an extra 40 to 50 calories and 3 g of fat.*

### Watch out for creamy sauces

Limit creamy sauces like mayonnaise, ranch, and Caesar dressing as they are high in calories and fat. Don't forget that tuna and seafood subs are usually mixed with lots of mayonnaise and are higher in fat. Instead choose mustard, light mayonnaise, hot sauce, or BBQ sauce. *Did you know that 15 mL (one tablespoon) of mayonnaise can add 110 more calories and 12 g more fat to your sub!*

### Choose whole grains

To add more fibre into your meal, choose whole wheat, multigrain, or oat bread. *A 6 inch sub in one of these flavours will usually add about 2 to 3 g of fibre to your meal.*

Compare these two Subway® meals:

MEAL 1	CALORIES	FAT (g)	SODIUM (mg)	FIBRE (g)	SUGAR (g)
Ham sub on whole wheat with vegetables and mustard (6 inch)	490	8	1363	6	10
Baked chips					
Bottle of water					

MEAL 2	CALORIES	FAT (g)	SODIUM (mg)	FIBRE (g)	SUGAR (g)
Tuna sub on white with vegetables and cheese (6 inch)	1128	33	1489	2	81
Regular chips					
Coke® (621 mL or 21 oz)					



## BOTTOM LINE

Eating at sub shops, like most fast food restaurants, can be part of a healthy eating pattern, if you make the healthier choices. If you're still not sure what the healthier choices are, go to the restaurant's website and look at the nutritional information, or ask for it next time you visit.

#### Key References

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