

Healthy Restaurant Kids' Meals Fast Facts

To provide you with the best science and to reduce review time, please find the following science-approved facts for use in your campaigns and materials. After each fact you will also find fast facts based on the science that can be cut and pasted word-for-word without need for additional science review. Please note that any change in wording will result in the need to run your documents through science review before release.

Children Eat Out Frequently

FACT 1

Approximately one-third (34.3 percent) of U.S. children and adolescents consumed fast food on a given day, in 2011-2012.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ About one-third of children and teens living in the United States eat fast food on a given day.
- ▶ About one-third of children and teens in the U.S. eat fast food on a given day.
- ▶ About one-third of kids and teens in the U.S. eat fast food on a given day.

Source:

Vikraman S, Fryar CD, Ogden CL. Caloric intake from fast food among children and adolescents in the United States, 2011-2012. NCHS Data Brief 2015; (213):1-8.

FACT 2

In 2011-2012, U.S. children and adolescents consumed an average of 12.4 percent of their daily calories from fast food restaurants.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Youth living in the United States consume on average about 12 percent of their daily calories from fast food.
- ▶ Youth in the U.S. consume on average about 12 percent of their daily calories from fast food.
- ▶ Kids and teens in the U.S. consume on average about 12 percent of their daily calories from fast food.

Source:

Vikraman S, Fryar CD, Ogden CL. Caloric intake from fast food among children and adolescents in the United States, 2011-2012. NCHS Data Brief 2015; (213):1-8.

FACT 3

Eighty-five (85) percent of households acquire food from restaurants and other eating places on average about five times (5.4/week) during a typical week.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ The vast majority of U.S. households eat out on average about five times a week.
- ▶ Eighty-five percent of U.S. households eat out on average about five times a week.
- ▶ Only 15 percent of households in the U.S. don't eat out on average about five times a week.
- ▶ About eight out of ten U.S. households eat out on average about five times a week.

Source:

Todd JE, Scharadin B; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Where Households Get Food in a Typical Week: Findings from USDA's FoodAps. Published July 2016. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/80542/eib-156.pdf?v=42663>. Accessed July 30, 2018.

Eating Out is Linked to Poorer Diets

FACT 4

On days when they eat from fast food restaurants, children consume an extra 126 calories and adolescents consume an extra 309 calories. Eating at full-service dining restaurants is associated with increases of 160 calories per day for children and 267 calories for adolescents.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When kids and teens eat out, they consume more calories than when they eat non-restaurant food.
- ▶ Kids consume an extra 126 calories on days when they eat fast food.
- ▶ Teens consume more than 300 extra calories on days when they eat fast food.
- ▶ On days when kids eat at full-service restaurants, they consume about 160 extra calories.
- ▶ On days when teens eat at full-service restaurants, they consume more than 260 extra calories.

Source:

Powell LM, Nguyen BT. Fast-food and full-service restaurant consumption among children and adolescents: effect on energy, beverage, and nutrient intake. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2013; 167(1):14-20, doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.417.

FACT 5

Among children aged 2-11 years, eating at fast food or full-service restaurants is associated with higher daily intake of calories, saturated fat, sugar, regular soda, and sugary drinks.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When kids eat at restaurants, they consume more calories, saturated fat, sugar, and sugary drinks.
- ▶ When kids eat out, they have more sugary drinks.
- ▶ Kids aged 2-11 years consume more calories, saturated fat, sugar, and sugary drinks when they eat out.

Source:

Powell LM, Nguyen BT. Fast-food and full-service restaurant consumption among children and adolescents: effect on energy, beverage, and nutrient intake. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2013; 167(1):14-20, doi: 10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.417.

FACT 6

An international study of 17 countries found that children aged 6 to 7 years, who consumed fast food at least once per week had higher body mass indexes (BMIs) than children who never consumed fast food or ate it only occasionally.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Kids, 6 to 7 years old, who eat fast food just once a week tend to have a higher BMI than those who rarely eat fast food.
- ▶ Kids, 6 to 7 years old, are more likely to have higher BMI if they eat fast food once a week or more.

Source:

Braithwaite I, Stewart AW, Hancox RJ, et al. Fast-food consumption and body mass index in children and adolescents: an international cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open.* 2014; 4(12), doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2014-005813.

FACT 7

Among U.S. children aged 2 to 18 years, 35 percent of their daily calories from added sugars and solid fats comes from fast food restaurants. Sugary drinks, dairy-based desserts, French fries, and pizza are the top contributors of these empty calories.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ About one-third of kids' daily calories from added sugars and unhealthy fats comes from fast food.
- ▶ About one-third of the calories kids consume from unhealthy fats and added sugars comes from fast food.
- ▶ Sugary drinks, dairy-based desserts, French fries, and pizza are the top contributors of calories from unhealthy fats and added sugars kids consume when eating fast food.

Source:

Poti JM, Slining MM, Popkin BM. Where are kids getting their empty calories? Stores, schools, and fast-food restaurants each played an important role in empty calorie intake among U.S. children during 2009-2010. *J Acad Nutr Diet.* 2014; 114(6):908-17, doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2013.08.012.

Restaurant Marketing

FACT 8

In a nationally representative sample of fast food restaurants located near public middle and high schools, more than 20 percent of restaurants marketed foods directly to children either inside or outside of the restaurant. Fast food restaurants that were part of a chain and offered kids' meals were more likely to market directly to children.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ More than 20 percent of fast food restaurants located near public middle and high schools market food directly to kids.
- ▶ Fast food chain restaurants that offer kids' meals are more likely to market directly to kids.

Source:

Ohri-Vachaspati P, Isgor Z, Rimkus L, Powell LM, Barker DC, Chaloupka FJ. Child-directed marketing inside and on the exterior of fast food restaurants. *Am J Prev Med.* 2015; 48(1):22-30, doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2014.08.011.

Sugary Drinks in Kids' Meals

FACT 9

In 2016, 74 percent of the top restaurant chains had sugary drinks available on kids' menus, a decrease from 93 percent in 2008. When looking at restaurant chains by the number of locations, this translates to 43 percent of restaurant outlets that have beverages on their kids' menus.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Nearly 75 percent of the top restaurant chains had sugary drinks on their kids' menus in 2016.
- ▶ The number of top restaurant chains that had sugary drinks on their kids' menus decreased by almost 20 percent between 2008 and 2016.

Source:

Ribakove S, Almy J, Wootan MG; Center for Science in the Public Interest. Soda on the Menu: Improvements Seen but More Change Needed for Beverages on Restaurant Children's Menus. Published July 2017. <https://cspinet.org/sites/default/files/attachment/Soda%20on%20the%20Menu.pdf>. Accessed July 31, 2018.

FACT 10

Sugary drinks—soda, fruit drinks, sport and energy drinks, and sugar-sweetened coffee and tea—are the leading source of added sugars in the American diet.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Sugary drinks are the leading source of added sugars consumed by people living in the United States.
- ▶ Sugary drinks, such as soda, fruit drinks, sport and energy drinks, and sugar-sweetened coffee and tea, are the leading source of added sugars consumed by people living in the U.S.
- ▶ The largest source of added sugars consumed by people living in the U.S. comes from sugary drinks.

Source:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th Edition. Published December 2015. https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/resources/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf. Accessed July 31, 2018.

FACT 11

Including beverages with children's meals may affect the number of children who get a caloric beverage, as families may stick with the default (to get a beverage) and to get their money's worth (part of the price paid and value of the meal includes the beverage).

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When sugary drinks are included in kids' meals, it can result in more kids getting additional calories from added sugars.
- ▶ When sugary drinks are offered with kids' meals, families may stick with the default beverage, which could result in more kids getting sugary drinks.
- ▶ When kids' meals include sugary drinks, it can lead to more kids consuming those beverages because families may want to get their money's worth since the beverage is included in the price.

Source:

Ribakove S, Almy J, Wootan MG; Center for Science in the Public Interest. Soda on the Menu: Improvements Seen but More Change Needed for Beverages on Restaurant Children's Menus. Published July 2017. <https://cspinet.org/sites/default/files/attachment/Soda%20on%20the%20Menu.pdf>. Accessed July 31, 2018.

Healthy Defaults

FACT 12

Defaults are the options people automatically receive if they do not choose something else. Studies from a wide range of fields (including retirement plans, organ donation, and food/nutrition) show that defaults exert a powerful influence on choice, and the default option is more likely to be chosen.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When default options are offered, most people are likely to stay with that option rather than choose something else.
- ▶ Default options influence people's choice.
- ▶ Studies across a wide range of fields show people are more likely to stay with the default option.

Source:

Wootan MG. Children's meals in restaurants: families need more help to make healthy choices. *Child Obes.* 2012; 8(1):31-3, doi: 10.1089/chi.2011.0111.

FACT 13

Children's meals with healthier defaults at Walt Disney World theme park restaurants resulted in 21 percent fewer calories compared to meals with unhealthy defaults. Guests accepted the default healthy side dishes 48 percent of the time and healthier beverages 66 percent of the time, even though options, such as French fries and a regular soft drink, were available upon consumer request.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ When healthier default options are the standard offered with restaurant kids' meals, consumers are more likely to order healthier items.
- ▶ Healthier default options can result in kids eating healthier.
- ▶ Making healthier default options the standard offered with restaurant kids' meals can result in kids eating healthier.
- ▶ Healthier kids' meal default options can lead to parents or kids accepting healthier choices.
- ▶ When restaurants make healthier default options the standard, consumers may be more likely to make healthier choices.
- ▶ At Disney restaurants, the healthier kids' meal default options reduced calories from sides and beverages by 21 percent.
- ▶ With healthier kids' meal default options in place at Disney restaurants, guests accepted healthy side dishes almost half of the time and healthier beverages two-thirds of the time.
- ▶ When Disney restaurants made healthier default options the standard for kids' meals, customers accepted healthier side dishes almost half of the time and healthier beverages two-thirds of the time.

Source:

Peters J, Beck J, Lande J, et al. Using healthy defaults in Walt Disney World restaurants to improve nutritional choices. *JACR.* 2016; 1(1):92-102, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/684364>.

FACT 14

At U.S. McDonald's restaurants, removing the listing of sodas on the Happy Meal section of menu boards resulted in 21 million more low-fat and fat-free milk jugs and 100 percent apple juice boxes sold over a period of 11 months, compared to the same period a year earlier.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Removing sodas from the Happy Meal section of menu boards in McDonald's in the U.S. led to customers selecting healthier beverage choices.
- ▶ Even though customers could still order sugary drinks, removing sodas from the Happy Meal section of the menu boards led to families and children choosing milk or juice more often.
- ▶ Removing sodas from the Happy Meal section of menu boards in U.S. McDonald's restaurants resulted in 21 million more low-fat and fat-free milk jugs and 100 percent apple juice boxes sold over a period of 11 months, compared to the same period a year earlier.

Source:

Alliance for a Healthier Generation. McDonald's and Alliance for a Healthier Generation Announce Progress on Commitment to Promote Balanced Food and Beverage Choices. Press release. June 25, 2015. <https://www.clintonfoundation.org/press-releases/mcdonalds-and-alliance-healthier-generation-announce-progress-commitment-promote>. Accessed July 31, 2018.

FACT 15

In a national survey, 68 percent of 8- to 12-year-old children were receptive to receive a fruit or vegetable side dish instead of French fries with their restaurant kids' meal, and 81 percent would receive milk, water, or flavored water instead of soda.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Kids are open to receiving healthier sides and beverages when eating out.
- ▶ A national survey showed that nearly 70 percent of 8- to 12-year-old children were willing to have a fruit or vegetable side dish instead of French fries with their kids' meal.
- ▶ A national survey showed more than 80 percent of 8- to 12-year-old children were interested in drinking milk, water, or flavored water instead of soda with their kids' meal.

Source:

Shonkoff ET, Anzman-Frasca S, Lynskey VM, Chan G, Glenn ME, Economos CD. Child and parent perspectives on healthier side dishes and beverages in restaurant kids' meals: results from a national survey in the United States. *BMC Public Health*. 2017; 18(1):56. doi: 10.1186/s12889-017-4610-3.

Restaurant Progress, but More is Needed

FACT 16

A study published in *Obesity* found that when the Silver Diner restaurant chain introduced a healthier kids' menu, orders of healthy meals, sides, and beverages increased with no declines in restaurant revenue, suggesting that restaurants can improve nutrition while remaining competitive. Two years later, children's ordering patterns remained healthier than before the menu change and in some cases, continued to improve.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Restaurants can offer healthier meals for kids and remain competitive.
- ▶ Restaurants can offer a healthier kids' menu without losing revenue.
- ▶ After the Silver Diner restaurant chain introduced a healthier kids' menu, orders of healthy meals, sides, and beverages increased with no declines in restaurant revenue.
- ▶ Two years after the Silver Diner restaurant chain introduced a healthier kids' menu, kids' orders remained healthier than before the menu was updated.

Source:

Anzman-Frasca S, Mueller MP, Sliwa S, et al. Changes in children's meal orders following healthy menu modifications at a regional U.S. restaurant chain. *Obesity*. 2015; 23(5):1055-62, doi: 10.1002/oby.21061.

Anzman-Frasca S, Mueller MP, Lynskey VM, Harellick L, Economos CD. Orders of healthier children's items remain high more than two years after menu changes at a regional restaurant chain. *Health Aff*. 2015; 34(11):1885-92, doi: 10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0651.

FACT 17

Several fast food restaurants have promised to remove sugary drinks from kids' meal menu boards. However, an evaluation found that those pledges were not consistently implemented. In 2016, restaurant personnel offered at least one healthier drink option with more than 80 percent of kids' meal orders at McDonald's, Burger King, and Subway restaurants, compared with 56 percent of orders at Wendy's and KFC and 33 percent at Dairy Queen.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Several fast food restaurants have promised to remove sugary drinks from kids' meal menu boards, but those pledges have not been consistently implemented.
- ▶ Staff at fast food restaurants don't always offer a healthier drink option with kids' meals.
- ▶ At McDonald's, Burger King, and Subway, staff offered at least one healthier drink option with more than 80 percent of kids' meal orders even after the commitment was made to only offer healthier drinks.
- ▶ At Wendy's and KFC, staff offered at least one healthier drink option with about half of kids' meal orders even after the commitment was made to only offer healthier drinks.
- ▶ At Dairy Queen, staff offered at least one healthier drink option with only 33 percent of kids' meal orders.
- ▶ At McDonald's, Burger King, and Subway, staff offered at least one healthier drink option with more than 80 percent of kids' meal orders, compared with 56 percent of orders at Wendy's and KFC and 33 percent at Dairy Queen.

Source:

Harris J, Hyary M, Seymour N, Choi Y-Y; UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. Are Fast-Food Restaurants Keeping Their Promises to Offer Healthier Kids' Meals? Published August 2017. http://www.uconnruddcenter.org/files/Pdfs/272-9%20%20Rudd_Healthier%20Kids%20Meals%20Report_Final%20Round_Web-150dpi_080117.pdf. Accessed July 31, 2018.

FACT 18

Despite several of the largest restaurant chains in the U.S. publicly committing to improve kids' meals, a study published in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found no substantial changes in calories, sodium, or saturated fat in children's menu items between 2012 and 2015 at 45 chain restaurants. Although the availability of soda on menu items declined over time, it did not change the availability of sugary beverages, which consistently constituted nearly 80 percent of beverages available.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Even though several of the largest restaurant chains in the U.S. have publicly committed to improve kids' meals, there were no substantial changes in calories, sodium, or saturated fat in kids' menu items across 45 chain restaurants between 2012 and 2015.
- ▶ There were no substantial changes in calories, sodium, or saturated fat in kids' menu items across 45 chain restaurants between 2012 and 2015 after the largest chains in the U.S. publicly committed to improving kids' meals.
- ▶ Although the presence of soda on kids' menus has declined over time, there is still a high percentage of sugary drinks available on most restaurant chain menus.
- ▶ There was a decline in soda on kids' menus from 2012 to 2015, but 80 percent of beverages continued to be sugary drinks across 45 chain restaurants.

Source:

Moran AJ, Block JP, Goshev SG, Bleich SN, Roberto CA. Trends in nutrient content of children's menu items in U.S. chain restaurants. *Am J Prev Med.* 2017; 52(3):284-291, doi: 10.1016/j.amepre.2016.11.007.

FACT 19

A study of four major U.S. fast food chains published in *Public Health Nutrition* found that foods, and to a lesser extent, beverages, promoted on menu boards and signs showed limited improvements in nutritional quality in 2013, compared to 2010. Foods and beverages pictured on kids' section of menu boards showed the greatest nutritional improvements. However, despite these small improvements, marketed foods and beverages in 2013 were, on average, still below 'healthier' cut-offs, especially those shown on general menu boards or signage.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Between 2010 and 2013, menu boards at McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, and Taco Bell didn't show much improvement in promoting healthier options.
- ▶ The menu boards at McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, and Taco Bell showed little improvement in promoting healthier options between 2010 and 2013.
- ▶ Foods and beverages pictured on the kids' section of menu boards showed the greatest nutritional improvements.

Source:

Soo J, Harris JL, Davison KK, Williams DR, Roberto CA. Changes in the nutritional quality of fast-food items marketed at restaurants, 2010 v. 2013. *Public Health Nutr.* 2018; 21(11):2117-2127, doi: 10.1017/S13688980018000629.

FACT 20

A 2018 report from the UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity found that in 2016, 91 percent of parents reported buying lunch or dinner for their child in the past week at one of the four largest fast-food restaurant chains (McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, and Subway), a significant increase compared to both 2010 (79 percent) and 2013 (83 percent).

Fast Facts:

- ▶ In 2016, nine out of 10 parents reported buying fast food for their child at McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, or Subway in the past week.
- ▶ In 2016, the vast majority of parents reported buying lunch or dinner for their child at one of the four largest fast food restaurant chains in the past week.
- ▶ Parents are increasingly buying fast food for their kids.
- ▶ In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of parents taking their kids to fast food restaurants.

Source:

Harris JL, Hyary M, Seymour N, Choi YY; UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. Parents' Reports of Fast-Food Purchases for Their Children: Have They Improved? Published September 2018. http://uconnruddcenter.org/files/272-10%20%20Healthier%20Kids%20Meals%20Parent%20Survey%20Report_Release_8_31_18.pdf. Accessed October 8, 2018.

FACT 21

Despite their voluntary healthier kids' meal agreements and commitments, 32 percent of parents who ordered a kids' meal from the top-four restaurants in 2016 continued to receive an unhealthy drink, while 61 percent reported receiving an unhealthy side. At the same time, the proportion of parents who received healthier items did not improve compared with 2010.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Despite fast food restaurants' commitments to offer healthier kids' meals, parents still reported receiving unhealthy sides and drinks with kids' meal orders in 2016.
- ▶ Nearly one-third of parents who ordered a kids' meal from McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, or Subway in 2016 received an unhealthy drink with the meal.
- ▶ More than half of parents who ordered a kids' meal from McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's, or Subway in 2016 received an unhealthy side with the meal.
- ▶ More than half of parents who ordered a kids' meal at one of the four largest fast food restaurant chains in 2016 received an unhealthy side, and nearly one-third of parents received an unhealthy drink.

Source:

Harris JL, Hyary M, Seymour N, Choi YY; UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. Parents' Reports of Fast-Food Purchases for Their Children: Have They Improved? Published September 2018. http://uconnruddcenter.org/files/272-10%20%20Healthier%20Kids%20Meals%20Parent%20Survey%20Report_Release_8_31_18.pdf. Accessed October 8, 2018.

FACT 22

The proportion of parents who ordered a kids' meal plus another item (sides, drinks, desserts, and main dish items) increased significantly at the four largest fast-food restaurant chains from 5 percent in 2010 to 19 percent in 2016.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ The percentage of parents who ordered a kids' meal plus another menu item at one of the four largest fast food restaurant chains increased significantly from 2010 to 2016.
- ▶ Nearly 20 percent of parents who ordered a kids' meal at one of the four largest fast food restaurant chains in 2016 also ordered another menu item, such as a side, drink, dessert, or main dish item.
- ▶ In 2016, nearly 20 percent of parents who ordered a kids' meal at one of the four largest fast food restaurant chains also ordered another menu item, such as a side, drink, or dessert, or main dish item, compared to just five percent in 2010.

Source:

Harris JL, Hyary M, Seymour N, Choi YY; UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. Parents' Reports of Fast-Food Purchases for Their Children: Have They Improved? Published September 2018. http://uconnruddcenter.org/files/272-10%20%20Healthier%20Kids'%20Meals%20Parent%20Survey%20Report_Release_8_31_18.pdf. Accessed October 8, 2018.

FACT 23

In 2016, nearly all parents responded positively to healthier kids' meal policies at the restaurant they visited and indicated that they will purchase food for their child at that restaurant more often because of the policy.

Fast Facts:

- ▶ Most parents who visited restaurants that have healthier kids' meal policies said they would order food from those restaurants more often because of the policy.
- ▶ Most parents have a better perception of restaurants that have healthier kids' meal policies.
- ▶ Most parents are more likely to buy food for their kids at restaurants that offer healthier kids' meals.

Source:

Harris JL, Hyary M, Seymour N, Choi YY; UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. Parents' Reports of Fast-Food Purchases for Their Children: Have They Improved? Published September 2018. http://uconnruddcenter.org/files/272-10%20%20Healthier%20Kids'%20Meals%20Parent%20Survey%20Report_Release_8_31_18.pdf. Accessed October 8, 2018.