

Fast food foes

Are the fast foods that we grab on the go putting us on the highway to poor health?

AT A GLANCE

- ▶ **Shocking levels of fat in everyday salads and sandwiches**
- ▶ **Coffees that have almost as many calories as a pizza**
- ▶ **How to avoid these fast food foes and find healthier choices**

Many of us regularly grab food when we're out and about, either for a lunch at work, a pit stop while shopping, a snack or even a quick dinner. For convenience, we're likely to pick from what's available on the shelves and menus of national food chains.

We've found examples where popping into a café for a coffee and a muffin could add 1,092 calories to your daily intake – more than half the calories a woman should consume in a whole day. We've also uncovered sandwiches and salads that contain more calories and fat than a Big Mac, and a pizza that contains an astonishing 7.1g salt.

The best way to avoid high-impact foods such as these is to compare the nutritional information provided on packaging, menus or shelf labels. But while many outlets do provide this kind of information, it's not always available, or at all comprehensive.

Health risks

Given the above examples it's perhaps not surprising that two thirds of UK adults and a third of children are classed as overweight or obese. Overconsumption of foods high in calories, sugar and fat is fuelling our obesity crisis. Being overweight can increase your risk of a range of diseases including some forms of cancer, diabetes,

hypertension and heart disease. It also increases your risk of respiratory and joint problems.

Sugar is under particular scrutiny at the moment, with new government recommendations on the amount of sugar we should have in our diet due soon. But we still have to watch our fat intake, as the evidence linking a high saturated fat intake to raised cholesterol levels and heart disease is indisputable.

To help you minimise these risks, over the next few pages we've highlighted some shocking examples of widely available snacks that are high in fat, sugar or salt, and give advice on how to make healthier choices.

Daily nutrient guidelines

These give an idea of how much an average adult should consume in one day – the figures are based on a 60kg woman doing an average amount of exercise.

Energy	2,000 kcal or 8,400 kJ
Total fat	70g
Saturates	20g
Carbohydrate	260g
Total sugars	90g
Protein	50g
Salt	6g

High street sandwiches & salads

Sugar-rich sarnies and salads with more fat than a burger

The most surprising find with three of the sandwiches is their unexpected sugar content; they each contain more than three teaspoons of sugar. This is down to the chilli sauces and pickles which contain high levels of sugar.

If you ate one of these sandwiches by itself for lunch, the calorie content alone might not be too high, but if you opt for a 'meal deal' by adding a packet of crisps and a juice, your lunch could easily pack in around 1,000 calories and come loaded with 40g of both sugar and fat.

The high calorie and fat content of all the salads is due to the creamy mayonnaise-based dressings. Just one tablespoon (around 15g) of mayo contains 101 calories and 11g of fat. As well as mayonnaise, watch out for pesto-based sauces as these can also be high in fat due to the cheese and nuts.



Asda Piri Piri Chicken Pasta Salad (290g, £2.07) **650 calories, 46.5g fat**

This lunch contains two thirds of your daily fat reference intake and more fat than a Burger King Bacon and Cheese Whopper. While the packaging recommends the pot contains three servings, we think it's more likely that someone would eat this at lunch by themselves.



Marks & Spencer Chicken and Smoked Bacon Salad on Soft Multigrain Farmhouse Bread

(£3.50)

694 calories, 37.1g fat, 2.8g salt

Although chicken is a low-fat filling, don't be fooled by this sandwich. The mayonnaise and bacon push up the fat and salt content so that this sandwich contains more calories and fat than a Pizza Express Classic Margherita pizza.

Caffè Nero Brie and Bacon Panini (£4.25)

624 calories, 15.8g sugar, 24.1g fat, 12g saturates, 3.2g salt

This contains more calories than a McDonald's Quarter Pounder with Cheese. The bacon and brie give a big hit of fat, saturates and salt, while caramelised onions also add to the sugar content.



Morrisons Tomato and Basil Chicken Pasta (330g, £1.27)

683 calories, 38.6g fat

Morrisons claims that this pot contains seven servings, but we think one person could easily eat this for lunch. In doing so, they would have consumed more fat and calories than in a McDonald's Big Mac. It also contains more than two teaspoons of sugar.

Marks & Spencer Chicken, Bacon and Sweetcorn Pasta Salad (380g, £3.30)

642 calories, 28.1g fat, 2.6g salt

This is in a creamy, mayonnaise dressing which pushes up the calories and fat. It does at least include sweetcorn, which will contribute to your five a day.



Tesco Honey and Mustard Chicken Pasta (300g, £2),

706 calories, 35.5g fat

This small pot of pasta packs in a massive 706 calories and 35.5g fat – half your daily fat reference intake. Most of the fat will come from the mayonnaise, but some also lurks in the crème fraiche and oil in the dressing.



Pret Posh Cheddar and Pickle on Artisan (235g, £3.25)

660 calories, 17.6g sugar, 26.8g fat, 9.1g saturates, 2.8g salt

You might expect a cheese sandwich to contain a significant amount of fat and saturates, but this one has nearly half the daily saturated fat guideline and contains more than three teaspoons of sugar.

Gregg's Mexican Chicken Baguette (£3) 602 calories,

15g sugar, 17g fat, 3.5g salt

The double whammy of mayonnaise and sweet chilli sauce in the baguette increase the sugar and fat content of this sandwich unnecessarily. The chilli sauce and fajita flavouring swell the salt content to almost 60% of your daily reference intake.



Smoothies & juices

Fruit drinks that contain high levels of sugar

New government guidelines on sugar are imminent and are expected to recommend a cut in 'free' sugar intake from 10% to 5% of daily calories. Free sugars aren't just those added to our food and drink, they also include naturally occurring sugars in fruit juice, honey and syrups. They all lead to tooth decay and obesity.

The equivalent of 5% of daily calories is around 25g of sugar (five teaspoons) for women and 35g (seven teaspoons) for men. All these drinks (right) exceed this new allowance for women in one fell swoop and take a man close to his limit. It's much healthier to avoid juices and eat whole fruit to reach your five a day, as juicing removes much of the fibre.

Volvic Touch of Fruit Lemon and Lime (500ml, 80p) **110 calories, 27.4g sugar**

Although known as 'flavoured water', this natural-looking drink actually contains more than five teaspoons of sugar in a bottle. After water, sugar is the most prominent ingredient followed by 'natural lemon and lime flavourings', but there's no evidence of any 'real' lemon or lime.



Naked Juice Green Machine (450ml, £2.36) **255 calories, 52g sugar**

This bottle contains more than 10 teaspoons of sugar. You might drink this in one go, but not eat the fruits inside in one sitting – 3.3 apples, a third of a kiwi, one banana, a slice of pineapple and a third of a mango. Here, you get the full sugar hit without the benefits of the whole fruit.



Marks & Spencer Vanilla Bean and Maple Syrup Smoothie (250ml, £1.50) **233 calories, 29.3g sugar**

It has as many calories as a four-finger Kit Kat, and it also contains a teaspoon more sugar. Although it's called a smoothie, with the healthy connotations this carries, we think it would be better off labelled as a pudding or sweet treat.



Innocent Pomegranates, Blueberries and Açai (250ml, £1.79) **158 calories, 34.8g sugar**

The seven teaspoons of sugar in this smoothie, although naturally occurring from the fruit, are as much as in a 330ml can of Coca Cola. And while you benefit from the fruit's vitamins, smoothies don't give you the feeling of fullness that you get from whole fruit.



Italian restaurants

Cheesy salads and meaty pizzas pile on the calories

Salads are not always the lightest options. A Pizza Express Bosco salad, for example, contains 651 calories, just a few less than the 683 in a Classic Margherita pizza.

Pizza Hut is the only pizza chain to offer calorie labelling on its menus, and Zizzi had no nutrition information available on its website when we looked. Other chains do clearly display their 'lighter' options for less than 500 or 600 calories, but ideally we'd also like to see the high-calorie and high-fat options signposted.

Prezzo offers 'light' versions of its pasta dishes which include a smaller portion with a mixed side salad, but it charges £1 more for this. Ask Italian does the same for an extra £1.50, seemingly making it more expensive for people to choose healthier options.

Prezzo Crab Cakes Starter (£5.85) **797 calories**

This starter contains more calories than two McDonald's Filet-o-Fish sandwiches. If you started with this and followed it with a Bianca Classic pizza (1,321 calories) or an Executive Posh Pepperoni pizza (1,345 calories) you would have exceeded your daily calorie intake.



Pizza Express Calzone Verdure (£12.60) **1,281 calories, 80.8g fat, 21g saturates, 7.1g salt**

Eat this and you'll exceed your daily reference intake for fat, saturated fat and salt in one sitting. You may think a vegetable pizza would be healthier, but the fat and salt in the cheeses and pesto add up to shocking levels.



Pizza Hut Large Stuffed Crust Pepperoni Feast Pizza (€14.95) **Per slice: 329 calories, 15.6g fat, 6.4g sat fat, 1.5g salt**

A large (14-inch) pizza has eight slices, so if you ate half you'd consume 1,316 calories, 62.4g fat, 25.6g saturates and 6g salt – more saturates than you should eat in a day, and your whole salt allowance.



Ask Italian Insalata Caprina (€10.45) **855 calories**

Just because something is labelled as a salad, don't assume it's a low-calorie option – as you've seen on the previous page. This goat's cheese salad with creamy herb dressing contains more calories than a classic Fiorentina pizza at Ask Italian.



Coffee shops

Surprisingly calorific snacks

A quick coffee and snack could see you inadvertently eat through a large chunk of your daily intake of calories, sugar and fat.

Caffè Nero, Costa Coffee and Starbucks all provide calorie information for their food. Costa

and Starbucks also show calorie details for some of their drinks, but, with so many variations, it's not available for every drink, especially once you've customised it with cream and syrups.

Surprisingly, muffins contain more calories than many of the pastries. In Caffè Nero a pain au chocolat contains 270 calories, compared with 461 in its lemon

and poppyseed muffin. Eat this muffin with a large, whole-milk latté and you've consumed 702 calories, more than a third of your daily allowance.

To limit the impact of coffees on your calorie intake, opt for flat whites or americanos and choose semi or skimmed milk. Avoid syrups – each shot contains about 122 calories and 30g of sugar.

Costa Coffee Whole Milk Hot Chocolate with Marshmallows and Whipped Cream, massimo (£3.35)

675 calories, 73.8g sugar, 29.8g fat, 18.7g fat

While this is a large (560ml) drink, it has the same calories as a Burger King Whopper, and more than 14 teaspoons of sugar.



Starbucks Almond Croissant (£1.99)

525 calories, 38.1g sugar, 26.1g fat, 12.4g saturates

This croissant contains 60% of your daily saturated fat. It has almost the same amount of calories as two Starbucks plain croissants (272 calories each).



Starbucks White Chocolate Whole Milk Mocha with Whipped Cream, venti (£3.40) **613 calories, 73.8g sugar, 25.8g fat, 16.5g saturates**

This large mocha contains as many calories as a main meal, more sugar than two 330ml cans of Coca-Cola and more than 80% of your daily saturated fat intake.



Costa Coffee Layered Carrot Cake (£2.50)

593 calories, 56.9g sugar, 26.2g fat

This cake contains more calories than two pains aux raisins (277 calories each). With a medium whole-milk cappuccino this would add up to a 756-calorie pit-stop.



Caffè Nero Strawberry and Vanilla Frappé Crème (£3.60)

469 calories, 54.4g sugar, 21.4g fat, 13.4g saturates

You'll be consuming 11 teaspoons of sugar, although some of this comes naturally from the strawberries. There's also lots of fat and saturates from the added cream.



Starbucks Lemon and Poppyseed Muffin (£1.89) **479 calories, 44.1g sugar, 21.9g fat**

You might assume that a muffin is a 'lighter' snack to have alongside your coffee, but we've found they can actually pack in nearly as many calories as two Snickers bars (250 calories each).



EXPERT VIEW

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ON THE GO



Shefalee Loth, Nutritionist
It's clear that making healthy

choices on the go is far from easy, especially when the types of foods that many of us typically perceive to be healthy may not necessarily be so.

While many shops and restaurants now offer nutritional information, not all do, and sometimes the information supplied does not cover all the items on the menu.

In a recent survey of UK adults*, most people said they try to eat healthily, at least sometimes. However there are barriers to doing this: a third said that healthy food is more expensive than unhealthy food, making it difficult for them to choose the healthy option.

Which? is working to tackle this problem and make it simpler to make healthy choices. We're calling on the next government to lead initiatives to tackle high rates of obesity and diet-related disease, including ensuring more responsible promotions, an industry-wide take-up of traffic-light labelling, and reducing unacceptable levels of fat, sugar and salt in foods. For your say on what foods you choose when out and about, go to which.co.uk/fastfood.

* Which? surveyed 2,102 UK adults online from 6-8 March 2015.



FIND OUT MORE

Previous food and health-related Which? articles

- 'Shortcuts to health', August 2014, p20-23
- 'Tasty and healthy spreads', February 2015, p59-61
- 'Don't fall for these packaging tricks', Dec 2014, p16-19

On Which.co.uk

- Find out the nutritional content of popular ready meals at which.co.uk/readymeals
- How to complain about poor-quality restaurant food at which.co.uk/badfood

Other useful contacts

- NHS healthy eating advice nhs.uk/livewell/goodfood



THE BOTTOM LINE

Grabbing a quick snack or drink can actually take a big bite out of your reference intakes for fat, sugar and salt. Use calorie and nutrition labelling to help you make informed choices; even if it's not shown in store, many restaurants provide this information online. All the supermarkets have committed to providing traffic-light labelling on their food – it's a great way of seeing at a glance whether an item is high in sugar, fat, saturates and salt.