



summer

SNACKS

The hot weather is here, kids are out of school, families and friends are gathering poolside to enjoy the summer festivities. It is a fun time of year; however, people tend to put on extra pounds during the summer months, in large part because of the noshing and indulging in cool drinks at the pool, which are inevitably part of the warm weather agenda. Unfortunately, available meals and snacks are typically not so healthy and can pile on the fat and calories in no time. And yes, a bite or two of your kids' chicken fingers and French fries, ice cream cone, and the occasional handful of potato chips can quickly add up! Try a little planning ahead and making healthier choices, and maybe you won't be kicking yourself by Labor Day, wondering why those cute new jeans are snug after just a few short months!

Typical poolside fare includes mostly fried choices such as chicken fingers and French fries, potato chips, ice cream bars, nachos, sugary drinks, etc. Tempting as it may be, the caloric content of these foods is shocking. Even seemingly healthy menu items can be a caloric nightmare, such as wrap sandwiches and salads with lots of fixings and creamy dressings.

If you want to avoid the temptation of the leftovers on your kids' plates, try some of these simple suggestions and substitutions that are good for the entire family:

- Instead of fried chicken fingers with French fries, about 700 calories, try a grilled chicken sandwich with a side of fruit, 435 calories.
- Swap a grilled chicken Caesar wrap (a whopping 746 calories!) for a turkey sandwich dressed with lettuce, tomato, and pickles for a modest 375 calories.
- Instead of a Cobb salad, packing 650 calories, try a grilled chicken salad with vinaigrette dressing, 365 calories.
- Trade nachos, 350+ calories, for just one portion of 6-8 nachos, for a grilled cheese sandwich on whole wheat bread, about 275 calories.
- Substitute ice cream treats, 200+ calories, for a fruit popsicle providing about 60 calories.

Beware of liquid calories. Replace regular sodas and juices for water, crystal light, or unsweetened ice tea to save ~150 calories. Frozen alcoholic drinks are enticing but can pack at least 300-400 calories each. Instead, opt for infused vodka mixed with diet 7-up with a squeeze of fresh lemon and lime, you will still feel like you are sipping a festive drink. If you prefer beer, swap a regular beer (about 150+ calories) for a Beck's Premium Light or Miller Genuine Draft which affords a modest 64 calories.

Packing healthy snacks can be an option, too. Try string cheese, fresh fruit (spear fruit kabobs which can be placed in the freezer the night before for a refreshing treat), protein bars, nuts mixed with dried fruit and cereal, peanut butter sandwiches, edamame, beef jerky, triscuit crackers, juice diluted with water. An ideal snack contains a little protein and carbohydrates. Kids are usually very active in the summer; good nutrition and hydration is a must.

For meals at home, here's an added bonus: summer is the perfect time to enjoy an array of fruits and vegetables in season. Check out the local farmer's market, which is usually fresh and cheaper. Light salads and fruit dishes can be cool and delicious while providing little calories. Why not take a break from the kitchen and those heavier cold weather dishes?

Take away message: the occasional indulgence is fine, but a three month splurge will make those cute sundresses and bathing suits fit a lot tighter. And remember, beware of mindless snacking, it still counts! A few bites of chicken fingers and French fries most days of the week for three months can amount to about a five pound weight gain by Labor Day.

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