



A Roadmap for Healthy Eating On the Go

By Lynn Machon

Summertime and road trips often go together. Whether driving up and down the state for your child's soccer tournaments, or across the country for a family reunion, road travel can be a fun adventure for the whole family.

Unfortunately, the open road also presents a challenge for those on a quest to find healthy eating options. For many families, nutritional needs tend to take a backseat to convenience, especially when children and teenagers are along for the ride.

To help keep a balanced diet while on the go this summer, it's time to think "outside the bag". With a little bit of planning and preparation, you won't have to sabotage your healthy ways just to reach your destination.

Pack It Up — Coolers in all sizes and shapes are perfect for packing homemade lunches and snacks for the road. Keep a soft-sided (for safety reasons) cooler next to you on the seat for an easy grab of grub for yourself or your passengers.

Some great items to take along include simple sandwiches, pre-lathered bagels, string cheese, granola bars, dried fruit, pretzels, and precut



fresh fruits and veggies (nature's own fast food).

Don't forget to include napkins and utensils if needed, but go for items that by design won't make a mess or require too much effort. Be sure and keep things bite-sized to prevent choking hazards, especially in young children.

And remember to bring along bottled water — you can freeze the bottles the night before and use them to help keep coolers cold.

Better Fast Food — If you do need to pull over to eat, there can be "flavorable" alternatives at every turn. Most traditional fast food places these days offer healthier menu options such as salads and wraps, or grilled chicken versus fried. Apple slices can be substituted for French fries and hamburgers can be served "protein style" (without the overprocessed bun).

Major franchises now provide nutritional fact sheets about menu items through each company's website. Take a minute to print out the PDF's for each restaurant before you hit the road, to not only help you make better choices, but for a great trivia game to pass the time. ("Which has more calories, McDonald's Double Quarter Pounder, or Burger King's Triple Whopper? Answer: The Triple Whopper with a whopping 1230 calories trumps the Quarter Pounder with "just" 740 calories. Ouch!)

Better yet, rather than "fast food", enjoy "quick nutrition" at roadside restaurants such

as Subway, Applebees or Denny's, where you can sit down and enjoy a salad or healthier sandwich option, without spinning your nutritional wheels. The benefit of getting a balanced meal will far outweigh (literally!) the extra time you spend eating the cuisine. If you're really pressed for time, use your cell phone to call ahead so you pick up your order to go.

Check out *Healthy Highways: The Traveler's Guide to Healthy Eating*, by Nikki and David Goldbeck, and *California Healthy*, by Patricia Hamilton, both available through Amazon.com, for a list of eatery options and health food stores along major roadways.

Take Your Kitchen With You — While staying away from home, it's best to stay near a refrigerator. Many major resorts and hotel chains provide a small kitchen or at least a tiny refrigerator inside the guestrooms.

Take advantage of the convenience by packing a large cooler with staples before you go, or visit the local grocery store once you arrive. You can control your diet and save a ton of money by buying cereal, milk, fruit and yogurt for breakfast, sandwich fixings for lunch, and veggies, crackers and cheese for snacks.

Think you'll go stir-crazy eating inside your hotel room? Pack a picnic and head outdoors for some quality family time. Many resorts, especially those with timeshare options, provide full kitchens and BBQ grills that allow you to prepare easy, home-style meals. Make it even more fun for smaller kids by making s'mores as a special after-barbeque treat.

Taking a roadtrip doesn't have to mean derailing your healthy eating habits. By mapping out a conscious eating plan, you can keep your nutritional needs on course. ■

