

Diet Dangers to Avoid This Summer

Planning on taking a vacation from healthy eating this summer? Not so fast! Long hot days used to mean more exercise, lighter eating, and pounds lost. But these days many people actually pile on pounds during the summer months, letting go of their normal routine and ending up heavier on Labor Day than they were on Memorial Day.

Here are four common ways that summer can sabotage your diet, and ways you can avoid them:



High calorie sips

It's important to stay hydrated in the summer heat, so drink plenty of liquids. But be aware that many beverages are calorie bombs in disguise. Shakes and smoothies, energy drinks, sweet iced coffee concoctions topped with whipped cream, and even sweetened iced tea and lemonade can add hundreds of calories a day to your diet – not to mention calorie-laden alcoholic beverages like frozen daiquiris, piña colodas, and margaritas.

Solution: If you want a quick and (relatively) painless way to slash calories from your daily diet, opt for low and no calorie drinks like water (make it fun and fizzy by using sparkling water, fresh berries, and a twist of lime) or unsweetened iced tea, and keep alcohol to 1 drink or less per day.

Screaming for Ice Cream

Do you celebrate summer with cold, creamy ice cream? An occasional treat is fine, but don't let trips to your favorite ice cream parlor become a daily habit. A double scoop of ice cream can cost you over 450 calories (cone not included!).



Solution: You don't have to avoid ice cream altogether, but limit frozen treats to no more than a couple times a week and keep your serving to 1/2 cup or 1 bar. Also try ice cream varieties that are "whipped" or "slow-churned" — they have fewer calories per serving. Frozen fruit bars (look for ones with 80 calories or less per serving) and sandwiches can also offer a satisfying fix for your cold treat cravings. Some of my favorite lighter frozen novelties include: Trader Joe's Mango & Cream

Bars (60 calories per serving), Tofutti Cuties (130 calories per (vanilla) bar), Edy's Slow Churned French Silk (130 calories per 1/2 cup).

Beaches and Ballparks

Days spent at the beach or ballgame can be some of the best ways to savor the summer – but they can also lead to diet disasters. Corn dogs, fried dough, nachos and cheese, burgers and fries may fill you up, but they'll also pack on the pounds if they're more than an occasional indulgence.

Solution: Instead of typical high calorie beach and ballpark concessions, opt for easy, make-ahead meals and snacks that will travel well wherever you go. You'll save money and your waistline. Some of my favorites are grilled chicken lettuce wraps (recipe: <http://www.marthastewart.com/1050331/grilled-chicken-and-corn-lettuce-wraps>), sliced apples and pears with almond



butter, and flatbread rollups with hummus and veggies. To cut calories and keep sandwiches from getting soggy, use a wholesome flatbread like Flatout Light, with 9g protein and 8g filling fiber in just 90 calories. Keep nut butters and dips in small plastic containers for mess-free travel. Also, a small, insulated carryall is a great way to keep food and beverages cool on hot summer days.

Backyard BBQs

Grilling is one of the healthiest ways to cook food – it minimizes added fats, and the high-heat brings out the natural flavors of food. But grilling is only as healthy as what you are grilling. If it's typical BBQ fare of burgers, brats and dogs, with a side of creamy potato salad, you can end up consuming more than 2,000 calories and more than two days' worth of fat.



Solution: Limit BBQ calories by using the leanest ground beef possible (for example ground sirloin), or grill skinless turkey breast, or even portabella mushrooms, instead. For hot dogs, go with a turkey or chicken frank. Watch the side dishes when you're outdoor entertaining, too, because mayo-drenched sides like pasta salad or potato salad can have as many calories as a burger.

You don't need to starve yourself on a fad diet if you want to look better in your shorts or swimsuit this summer.

The secret to maintaining a healthy weight is to choose healthy foods and take in fewer calories than you burn. The best foods for weight loss in summer are light, refreshing and, most important; keep you out of the hot kitchen!