

Social Substitutes

It's important to enjoy time with friends and family. Just because you've decided to live a healthier lifestyle, doesn't mean that you need avoid social situations. With this said, food is often part of social gatherings, and it's easy to get off track or fall into old habits in these settings. When it comes to maintaining healthy living in social situations, what's the trick to success? Planning! Benjamin Franklin once said, "If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!"

Before you attend a social gathering, brainstorm about what you'll eat. If you're going to a restaurant, look ahead at their menu, if possible, and identify some healthier options. If you're going to a party, bring some type of a healthy side dish to offer the group. By planning ahead, you give yourself a social substitute to enjoy, a healthier option to eat in a social situation. You'll also go into the situation with strengthened willpower because you've made your choice before the event even started.

There are many possibilities for social substitutes. The guiding principle is that you choose a healthier option to replace a less healthy food during social events. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Carrots instead of chips
- Whole-grain toast instead of a bagel
- Fresh fruit instead of toaster pastries
- Chicken and veggie stir-fry instead of burgers
- Grilled chicken instead of fried or breaded chicken

Your Action Plan

What can you eat when other people are eating unhealthy? We've given you a few examples of substitutes. Can you think of others? Use **this chart** to write down at least 2 substitutes you can have instead of unhealthy options.

Social Situation	Unhealthy Food	Healthy Substitute
Example: Lunch with friend	Soda & fried chicken tenders in BBQ sauce	Water and grilled chicken salad