Eat Smart TIPS

Are you salad-bar savvy?

Navigating a buffet of veggies, side dishes and toppings might be harder than you think. Practice these tips when

Opting for the salad bar? It might not be healthier than ordering from the menu. Unless you make careful choices, you could unintentionally end up with a plate overflowing with calories and fat.

Don't be a victim of this common diet trap — be proactive. Before you order, peruse the salad bar and consider these points.

- **Go green.** Lettuce or fresh spinach is generally the foundation of a healthy salad. Do the greens look fresh and plentiful?
- **Survey the fresh fruits and vegetables.** In addition to greens, you'll want to pile on fresh vegetables and fruits, such as tomatoes, mushrooms, carrots, broccoli, cauliflowers, cucumbers, beets, radishes, bell peppers, pineapple, cantaloupe, watermelon, grapes and strawberries. Is there a good offering of these items?
- **Acknowledge the extras.** Many people go wrong at salad bars by including too many high-fat ingredients — like cheese, chopped eggs, bacon bits, buttery croutons and pasta or potato salad. When you go through the salad bar, take only very small amounts of these items or avoid them all together. If there are too many enticing foods and you don't feel confident you can make good choices, consider healthier options from the menu rather than facing temptation from the salad bar.
- **Don't forget the dressings.** Look for fat-free or low-fat, low-calorie dressings, such as low-fat Italian or reduced-calorie French. Other options include vinegars. You can also add flavor to your salad with lemon, herbs and peppers. Check to see if any seasonings are available.

You can enjoy a healthy meal when dining out at a salad bar just by taking a moment to give careful consideration before grabbing those tongs.