



WISE CHOICE VS WORST CHOICE

PICKING THE BEST FOODS FROM THE VENDING MACHINE

Because vending machines are a part of our daily lives, learning how to pick healthy food from them is a must if we intend to maintain our weight and eat nutritiously while away from home. Below you'll find comparisons of four different vending machines—two typical snack food machines, a “fresh food” machine containing some more substantial, lunch type items, and finally, the classic soda machine. Let's evaluate the choices in these machines, picking both the best and worst items from each. In today's fast-paced world where vending machine food is almost unavoidable, this comparison will help you...choose wisely.



Vending Machine #1

Contents: Potato chips, nacho chips, cheese crackers, pretzels, candy bars, cupcakes, Oreo cookies, doughnuts, hard candy, and several different brands of chewing gum.

Wise Choice: Pretzels are your best bet here. Unlike all the other crunchy, comfort foods, pretzels are very low in fat and high in carbohydrates. Carbohydrates will give you sustained energy as opposed to the quick rush of energy you get from gobbling down a candy bar. If you see any baked potato or nacho chips, they would be a wise choice, too. Baking can substantially reduce the fat content in chips.

Worst Choice: It's a toss-up. The doughnuts are extremely high in calories (500+) and also full of sugar which will eventually be stored as fat. The candy bar, depending on which one you choose, isn't a wise choice either. Most candy bars contain about 300 calories and 15 grams of fat—awfully high numbers for something that's gone in five minutes.



Vending Machine #2

Contents: Oatmeal cookies, jumbo soft pretzels, animal crackers, soft chewy candies, nut rolls, taffy, onion chips, pork rinds, popcorn cakes.

Wise Choice: Popcorn cakes. These can be great snacks because a four-ounce serving contains only 160 calories and 2 grams of fat. Popcorn (unless it's drenched in butter and covered in salt) is always a wise decision. Animal crackers rank as a close second. You'll want to read the food label, but depending on your serving size, animal crackers can also be a low-calorie, low-fat snack.

Worst Choice: The pork rinds, hands down. This classic little snack racks up big numbers when it comes to fat and calorie content. Would you believe that a four-ounce serving of pork rinds contains 600 calories and almost 40 grams of fat? Eating more than 4 ounces can quickly bring you to your limit for both fat and calories for the entire day—in just one snack!



Fresh Food Machine

Contents: Often found in convenience stores and airports, these machines dispense more substantial items like ham and cheese sandwiches, tuna fish sandwiches, fresh green salads, yogurt, bagels, and even baked potatoes with savory toppings.

Wise Choice: There's no surprise here, the green salad is your best bet—especially if the dressing is on the side. If you're really hungry, the baked potato is a pretty good choice, but you'll need to scrape off most of the toppings—especially if it's cheese. Oftentimes, the cheese on these items is of the processed variety, and is loaded with fat.

Worst Choice: Watch out for almost any of the sandwiches. These sandwiches are usually loaded with high-fat spreads like mayonnaise (especially the chicken salad or tuna salad) and are usually served on white bread. White bread means “junk carbs”—carbohydrates that will likely be stored as fat.



The Soda Machine

Contents: Cola, Cherry Cola, Dr. Pepper, Lemon Lime, Citrus, Orange, Root Beer, Ginger Ale, Seltzer Water.

Wise Choice: If you're lucky enough to find a soda machine—or you're at a restaurant that has seltzer water—drink up. There are no calories and it can be quite refreshing. However, chances are, you won't find seltzer water, so at least try to choose a diet soda. Diet sodas are usually calorie and sugar free, and they're a pretty good way to go.

Worst Choice: Without question, orange soda is your worst choice at the soda machine. It has the most calories and the most sugar. If you simply must have orange soda—or soda at all for that matter—try to switch to diet. Once you're used to the change you'll wonder how you ever drank the super sweet, regular stuff.

