




Taco Time!

In Mexico, a taco is pretty much the equivalent of our sandwich. But instead of wheat bread, it's a corn tortilla that packages up all kinds of fillings. Tacos have become a beloved food in the U.S., where our most common fillings have been ground beef, lettuce, tomatoes, and cheese. But in recent years the variety of fillings has grown. It's become easy to find chicken and fish tacos, as well as breakfast tacos filled with eggs, cheese, and more. But, given those fried corn tortillas and layers of meat and cheese, can tacos fit into a healthy eating plan?

It's the fillings! The fillings you choose to put into your tortilla can make or break the nutritional rankings of your meal. Beans, chicken, and grilled fish are all low-fat protein sources. In addition, vegetables, such as lettuce, tomatoes, and corn, offer fat-free fiber and nutrients, while avocado can provide a source of healthy fat. Go easy on the cheese, sour cream, and salsas, which often are high in fat and sodium.

Helpful hints. Consider these tips the next time you're ordering a meal of tacos.

- **Don't automatically go soft.** Choosing a hard or soft shell depends on what your health concerns are. Soft shells, while usually lower in fat, are often higher in calories and sodium, due to their larger size.
- **Make it fast.** In most cases, tacos at sit-down restaurants tend to be much higher in fat, calories and sodium than those from quick-serve restaurants. The large portion sizes are most likely the reason; many contain half a day's worth of calories and a day and a half's worth of sodium. You could eat half and take the rest home, but if you have difficulty stopping at half, you may want to limit your tacos to quick-serve spots. Order just one and round out the meal with fruit and beans.
- **Taco bar.** Tacos at home can be a fun, easy and healthy meal. Chop up an assortment of veggies—get creative and consider red and green peppers and scallions, use whole grain tortillas, and reduced-fat cheese. If you use meat, replace half with rinsed, drained beans. You'll cut the fat and calories, while boosting the fiber. 

—Heidi McIndoo, MS, RD

Supermarket Guide



Tacos Nutrition Comparison

✓ = **EN's Picks.** Picks contain no more than 200 calories (10% DV), 5 g fat (8% DV), 3 g saturated fat (15% DV), and 640 mg sodium (27% DV).

TACOS	Serving (oz)	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carbs (g)	Sodium (mg)	Protein (g)	Fiber (g)
BEEF								
✓ La Salsa Mexico City Taco, Steak	1 taco (4.1 oz)	190	5	1	27	278	11	2
La Salsa Fajita Taco, Steak	1 taco (5.8 oz)	246	12	5	19	669	16	1
On the Border Crispy Ground Beef Taco	1 order	320	20	8	19	590	18	4
On the Border Soft Ground Beef Taco	1 order	340	18	8	24	880	20	2
Ruby Tuesday Steak Taco	1 taco	335	22	n/a	20	874	17	2
Taco Bell Double Decker Taco Supreme	1 taco	350	16	6	39	730	14	7
✓ Taco Bell Grilled Steak Soft Taco	1 taco	200	9	3	17	450	13	2
Taco Bell Nacho Cheese Doritos Locos Taco	1 taco	170	10	3.5	13	360	8	3
Taco Bell Soft Beef Taco	1 taco	190	9	4	18	500	9	3
Taco Bell Soft Beef Taco Supreme	1 taco	220	11	5	20	520	10	3
Taco Cabana Crispy Beef Taco	1 taco (3.4 oz)	180	10	3.5	12	420	11	2
Taco Cabana Soft Beef Taco	1 taco (4.1 oz)	220	9	5	21	710	13	1
✓ Taco Cabana Steak Fajita Taco	1 taco (3.3 oz)	200	6	3	21	640	12	1
Taco Time Crisp Ground Beef Taco	1 taco (4 oz)	260	17	5	12	460	14	2
Taco Time Super Soft Ground Beef Taco (Wheat tortilla)	1 taco (10.5 oz)	590	23	10	63	2380	20	12
CHICKEN								
Chili's Crispy Chicken Tacos	1 order	1510	73	22	151	4040	63	12
Don Pablo's Crispy Chicken Taco Trio	1 order	1005	54	n/a	93	2200	40	6
Don Pablo's Grilled Chicken Taco Trio	1 order	904	36	16	80	2105	63	4
✓ La Salsa Mexico City Taco, Chicken	1 taco (4.1 oz)	188	3	0	27	232	13	2
On The Border Crispy Chicken Taco	1 order	260	12	5	18	540	17	3
On the Border Soft Chicken Taco	1 order	270	11	5	23	840	19	1
Ruby Tuesday Cajun Chicken Taco	1 taco	352	20	n/a	19	970	23	3
Ruby Tuesday Fried Chicken Taco	1 taco	356	23	n/a	20	806	15	2
✓ Taco Bell Chicken Soft Taco	1 taco	160	5	2.5	16	480	12	2
✓ Taco Bell Fresco Chicken Soft Taco	1 taco	140	3.5	1	16	470	10	2
✓ Taco Cabana Chicken Breast Fajita Taco	1 taco (3.3 oz)	180	5	2	21	640	14	1
Taco Cabana Soft Chicken Taco	1 taco (4.3 oz)	200	7	3	22	720	12	1
Taco Time Soft Chicken Taco	1 taco (7 oz)	360	9	4.5	40	860	28	7
Taco Time Super Soft Chicken Taco (wheat tortilla)	1 taco (10.5 oz)	530	16	8	60	2160	34	10
OTHER								
Chili's Spicy Grilled Shrimp Tacos	1 order	1100	52	13	125	3560	40	14
Don Pablo's Buffalo Shrimp Taco Trio without Dressing	1 order	1242	54	21	127	5803	60	7
Don Pablo's Fried Shrimp Taco Trio without Dressing	1 order	1059	35	15	124	3693	58	7
Don Pablo's Grilled Shrimp Taco Trio without Dressing	1 order	883	43	17	71	2922	50	5
La Salsa Baja Fish Taco	1 taco (6.1 oz)	393	22	4.5	29	367	20	2
La Salsa Vegetarian Taco	1 taco (6.5 oz)	280	10	6	37	420	12	4
On the Border Dos XX Fish Taco, Creamy Red Chile Sauce	1 order	550	39	9	34	930	17	1
Ruby Tuesday Spicy Fish Taco	1 taco	333	22	n/a	19	790	16	2
Ruby Tuesday Fried Shrimp Taco	1 taco	406	26	n/a	29	1366	13	3
Taco Bell Crispy Potato Soft Taco	1 taco	250	12	3	29	490	6	3
Taco Cabana Shrimp Tampico Taco	1 taco (3.8 oz)	180	6	3	22	730	9	1
Taco Time Soft Pork Taco	1 taco (7 oz)	460	21	4.5	43	690	24	6

Note: pkg=package, g=gram, mg=milligram, sat fat=saturated fat, carb=carbohydrates, DV=Daily Value. Daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: restaurant websites