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Keeping Portions Under Control

Keeping Portions Under Control

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These days, lots of us eat too much and may not realize it because we've become so used to seeing (and eating!) large food portions.

The Problems of Eating Too Much

People who often overeat are likely to become **overweight**. They also risk getting a number of medical problems, including **high blood pressure**, high cholesterol, **type 2 diabetes**, bone and joint problems, **sleep apnea**, and even **depression**. Adults who are overweight are at greater risk for heart disease and **stroke**.

It's easy to understand why restaurants and food manufacturers serve large portions: Customers like to feel that they're getting the best value for their money! But the value meal is no deal when it has too much fat, sugar, and calories and sets the stage for health problems.

The Basics on Serving Sizes

One reason that people eat too much at meals is that they tend to eat what's on their plate. As portions have increased, so have the calories we eat. So it's helpful to understand the difference between serving sizes, portion sizes, and recommended amounts of different foods.

Serving sizes. The serving size on a food label is based on the amount of food people typically eat. It is not telling you the amount you *should* eat. The serving size helps you see how many calories and nutrients — including fat, sugar, and salt — are in that quantity of that food.

Sometimes the serving size on the food label will be a lot less than you are used to eating or serving. **Portion size** is the amount of food you choose to eat. In some cases, it's perfectly OK (and even a good idea) to eat more than the serving size listed. For example, if you're cooking frozen vegetables and see the serving size is 1 cup, it's no problem to eat more because most vegetables are low in calories and fat, yet high in nutrition.

But when it comes to foods that are high in calories, sugar, or fat, the serving size is a useful guide to alert you that you may be getting more than is healthy. Let's say you buy a 3-ounce bag of cookies and you eat the whole bag. If the label shows the serving size is 1 ounce, not only did you have 3 servings, you also had 3 times the listed calories as well as 3 times the sugar.

Recommended amounts. Serving sizes tell you how much people typically eat and the nutrition in that amount. Serving sizes don't tell you which foods you need to stay healthy — or how much of those foods to eat. That's where the U.S.

Department of Agriculture's MyPlate comes in. [MyPlate](#) is based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. It recommends the right mix and amount of food for you and your family.

What to Look for

A great way to think about portion sizes is to use the concept of the "divided plate." Similar to MyPlate, think of a plate divided into 4 sections:

- One quarter (1 section) of the plate is for protein.
- One quarter (1 section) of the plate is for starches (like potatoes and corn) and grains, preferably a whole grain (like brown rice and whole-wheat bread).
- Half the plate (2 sections) is for veggies (or fruit and veggies).

The food in each section should not overlap or be piled high. Dividing the plate this way not only will help you keep portions under control, but will help you serve more balanced meals to your family.

Portion-Control Tips

Parents can take control of their portion sizes and help kids learn to do the same.

Here are some tips:

- Serve food on smaller plates so meals look larger. A sandwich on a dinner plate looks lost, but on an appetizer plate it looks downright hefty.
- When cooking large batches or storing leftovers, separate them into smaller portions before you put them in the fridge

or freezer. That way, when your family reaches in, they'll automatically grab a portion that makes sense.

- Don't let kids eat out of bags or containers. Serve individual portions on plates or in bowls and make it a rule to eat in the kitchen.
- Don't eat in front of the TV or other screens.
- Dish out meals at the counter rather than bringing the whole pot to the table. Not keeping the food at arm's length can make your family think twice about reaching for seconds. If they do want seconds, offer more veggies or salads.
- Aim for 3 scheduled healthful meals and 1-2 [healthy snacks](#) throughout the day. Skipping a meal can lead to overeating at the next one.
- Add more salads and fruit to your family's diet, especially at the start of a meal, which can help control hunger and give a sense of fullness while controlling calorie intake.
- Try not to rush through meals. Go slowly and give everyone a chance to feel full before serving more. Family sit-down meals are also great times to reconnect with one another.
- Don't insist that kids clean their plates. Encourage them to stop eating when they feel full.
- When eating at restaurants, share meals, order an appetizer as a main dish, or pack

up half to take home before you begin to eat. When getting take-out, order fewer meals and serve family style. At fast food places, choose kids meals with healthy options (milk, fruit, or carrots).

Getting Kids Involved

Get kids actively involved in figuring out how much to eat.

A serving of rice is about the same size as an ice cream scoop, so let your child use the scoop to serve "rice cream" to the family. A piece of meat should be about the size of a deck of cards, so see how that chicken breast measures up. And why not break out the kitchen scale while you're at it? Weighing or measuring food may not be your idea of fun, but it probably is to your kids — plus it's a great way to reinforce math concepts.

One easy way to size up portions if you don't have any measurements is to use your hand as a guide. Kids have smaller hands than adults, so it serves as a reminder that kids should eat smaller portions:

- A closed fist is about right for a portion of pasta, rice, cereal, vegetables, and fruit.
- A meat portion should be about as big as the palm.
- Limit the amount of added fats (like butter, mayo, or salad dressing) to the size of the top of the thumb.

And don't forget the good news about portions: They work both ways. You may want to cut back on spaghetti portions, but you can dish out more than 1 serving of carrots or green beans. This can help make the "5 a day" fruit and

vegetable goal more doable.

Remember the role you play in showing kids how to size up portions. By eating mindfully, that's what your kids will learn too.

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Keeping Portions Under Control

Post Test – January 2024

Please keep this test and certificate in your files for Licensing.
You do not need to send it in to our office or the State.

1. Adults who are _____ are at greater risk for heart disease and stroke.
2. The _____ size helps you see how many calories and nutrients, including fat, sugar and salt, are in that quantity of that food.
3. Portions size is the amount of food you choose to eat. In most cases, it's never OK to eat more than the serving size listed.
True or False?
4. A great way to think about portion sizes is to use the concept of the "divided plate", similar to MyPlate. $\frac{1}{4}$ for protein, $\frac{1}{4}$ for starches and _____ is for fruits and veggies
5. Don't let kids eat out of bags or containers. Serve individual portions on _____ or in _____ and make it a rule to eat in the kitchen.
6. Add more salads and fruit to your family's diet, especially at the _____ of a meal which can help control hunger and give a sense of fullness.
7. A serving of rice is about the same size as an ice cream scoop, so let your child use the scoop to serve "rice cream" to the family.
True or False?
8. Weighing or measuring food may not be your idea of fun, but it is to your kids, plus it's a great way to reinforce _____ concepts.
9. A closed fist is about right for a _____ of pasta, rice, cereal, vegetables and fruit.
10. By eating _____, that's what your kids will learn too.

December 2024 Quiz Answers. 1.Vegetarian Diet 2.Lacto-Vegetarians 3.True 4.Fiber/Diabetes 5.Iron-Fortified 6.Toddlers 7.False 8.Lacto-Ovo 9.Eating Disorder 10.Whole Grain



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