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OPTIFAST® Lifestyle Education Series™

Smart Strategies for Portion Control

The calorie intake of the average American continues to grow, and these extra calories can add up to weight gain. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), between 1971 and 2000 American women increased the number of calories they consumed by 22 percent (a 335 calorie increase), while men increased their intake by 7 percent (a 168 calorie increase)¹. Here are just a few examples of portion sizes from 20 years ago and today².

20 Years Ago

Today



3" diameter
140 calories



6" diameter
350 calories



330 calories



600 calories



1c. spaghetti
with sauce &
3 small meatballs
500 calories



2c. spaghetti
with sauce &
3 large meatballs
1025 calories

20 Years Ago

Today



1.5 ounces
210 calories



4 ounces
500 calories



6.5 ounces
85 calories



20 ounces
250 calories

tools for success

- Recognize the difference between portion sizes and serving sizes.
- Familiarize yourself with standard serving sizes and how those relate to the portions of food you eat.
- Learn tips for portion control to help with long term weight management.
- Learn how to use your dinner plate to determine portion sizes and food choices.

1. *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report*. Volume 53 (04), February 6, 2004
2. <http://hp2010.nhlbi.nih.net/portion>

The trend for larger portions started in restaurants to attract consumers, but over time even at home people started eating and drinking more. While the average dinner plate in 1970 used to measure only 10 inches in diameter, today it's closer to 12 inches. Juice glasses then were a mere four ounces; today they are closer to eight ounces. So what does this mean for you and your desire to manage your weight? It means gaining more awareness about the portions of food that are right for your caloric needs. Following the guidelines in this module can help you maintain a healthy weight over time.

What's the Difference between a Portion Size and a Serving Size?

A portion size is the actual amount of food you choose to eat. There is no standard portion size nor is there a "right" or "wrong" portion size.

A serving size is a standard unit of measure. It is used to help give advice about how much to eat or drink or to identify the calories and nutrients in a food or beverage.

As an example, a standard serving size of bread is one slice. An office worker with a sedentary lifestyle may find that a slice of toast is an adequate portion for his breakfast. In contrast, a long distance runner may need two or three slices (or servings) for his breakfast portion.

The portion sizes you eat will depend on your unique needs:

- **Your height and weight:** Large, tall people require more calories than short, small people.
- **Your health status:** People with wounds or certain illnesses may require more calories and nutrients.
- **Your activity level:** The more active you are, the more calories you can eat with less chance of weight regain.
- **Your stage of life:** Your caloric needs vary depending on your gender, age, and stage of life (i.e. adolescence, pregnancy, lactation).

Your clinic staff will help you determine your calorie needs and give you a meal plan for the maintenance phase of the program. You can also visit www.MyPyramid.gov which offers personalized eating plans and interactive tools to help you plan your food choices based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

How Much Do You Eat?

To figure out how much you're actually eating, it's helpful to familiarize yourself with standard serving sizes established by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). (See next page)

After reviewing the serving sizes, you may notice they're smaller than most people eat. A pasta meal served in a restaurant can have as much as 4 cups of pasta, which equates to 8 servings! And those jumbo bagels served at most cafés? They're about 4 or 5 servings. The next step is to get better acquainted with what you've been eating and how that compares to standard serving sizes.

Create Your Food Lab

Supplies needed: your usual bowls, plates, and glassware; ½ and 1 cup dry measuring cups (the kind used for measuring flour), liquid measuring cup, kitchen food scale, dry cereal, and a raw boneless chicken breast.

- Pour out your usual portion of dry cereal into a bowl. Using the dry measuring cup, measure the cereal in the bowl and compare it to the serving size on the Nutrition Facts label on the container (these may vary slightly from the USDA serving sizes). How many servings are you actually eating? Now measure the serving size on the label and place it in a bowl. Make a mental note of it: how much of the bowl does it fill?

Helpful Hint: Using smaller bowls makes it more difficult to serve larger portions than desired.

Standard Serving Sizes

Food	Serving	What This Looks Like
Meat, poultry, and seafood	3 ounces, boneless cooked	Deck of cards
Dried beans	½ cup cooked	½ baseball
Nuts	1 ounce	Small level handful
Peanut butter	2 tablespoons	Woman's thumb
Milk	1 cup	—
Cheese	1.5 ounces	9-volt battery or 4 dice
Cottage cheese	½ cup	Tennis ball
Pasta, rice, cooked cereal, potatoes, corn, peas	½ cup	Tennis ball
Ready-to-eat cereal	1 ounce (varies from ¼ cup to 1-¼ cups depending on weight-check label)	—
Crackers and chips	1 ounce	7-14 pieces, depending on weight-check label
Bread	1 ounce	Audiocassette tape
Bagel	½ small	Hockey puck
Fresh fruit	1 medium piece	Baseball
Cut-up fruit	1/2 cup	Tennis ball
Dried fruit	¼ cup	Golf ball
Juice	½ cup	—
Raw leafy vegetables	1 cup	Baseball
Chopped vegetables	½ cup	Tennis ball

- Place the boneless chicken breast on the kitchen scale and note its weight. Small breasts may be as low as four ounces while large ones may be as much as eight ounces (a four ounce breast will weigh about three ounces after cooking). Now grill, roast, or poach it and note the cooked weight. Measure a 3 ounce portion, put it on your plate, and make a "snapshot" of its size (about the size of a deck of cards).
- Pour water into a glass to the level you usually drink and then pour this into the liquid measuring cup. Is that "cup" of juice you're drinking actually 10-16 ounces? Measure one cup and pour it into a glass. How far does it fill the glass?
- You can do this measuring exercise with other foods you eat such as meat, fish, rice, pasta, potatoes, beans, and corn. Make a mental picture of the appropriate portion for you; place your fist over the portion and see how it compares in size, using that for future reference.

Helpful Hint: Using smaller plates for your meals helps keep portions smaller.

Portion Control Tips

1. **Follow your meal plan and eat at regular times.** It's easier to be satisfied with smaller portions if you're eating regularly and not skipping meals.
2. **Leave the large packages at the store (except for vegetables and fruits!).** Research shows we consume more food from larger containers resulting in overeating¹. If you do buy supersized packages of food, repackage them in smaller containers.
3. **Honor your body's cues.** Your body's signals of hunger and fullness can help you eat the right amount of food for you.
4. **Use smaller dishes, glasses, and serving spoons** to help keep your portions smaller.
5. **Prepare less food so you have fewer leftovers.** Place leftovers in single-serve containers and freeze or use for a meal the next day.
6. **Plate your food in the kitchen.** Skip the serving bowls on the table except for the salad and vegetables. That way if people want seconds they're more likely to eat the lower calorie options on the table. A study at Cornell University showed that keeping serving dishes off the table reduced calories eaten at meals by 20-30%².
7. **Make mealtime pleasurable.** Keep conversations non-confrontational, play soothing music, and bring out your candles and cloth napkins.
8. **Start with small servings and wait 20 minutes for seconds.** It takes about that long for your brain to get the signal that you're full².
9. **Embrace the Japanese tradition of "hara hachi bu", only eating until you're 80% full.** That means stopping as soon as you are no longer hungry, but before you start feeling full.
10. **Plate all your meals and snacks and then sit down at a table to eat.** That means no more eating out of containers, munching at the kitchen counter, or snacking on the sofa.
11. **Plan in advance what you're going to order at a restaurant.** You can view menus of many restaurants on their websites. Have a small snack such as yogurt or an OPTIFAST shake or bar before you go so you're not starving.
12. **Go small or share.** Consider ordering "small plates," healthy appetizers, children's or senior meals, or splitting an entrée or dessert with a dining companion to keep the portions more reasonable.
13. **Ask the server to bring a take-out container with your meal.** Put half of your food in the container for another meal.
14. **The salt shaker can be your ally.** If you don't want to take a container with you but you don't want to eat all the food on your plate, push the food you don't want to eat to one side. Then heavily salt that food, essentially making it inedible! This is a very effective technique to keep you from picking at the leftover food on your plate.
15. **As soon as you're done eating, place your open napkin over your plate.** This is a visual reminder to yourself that you are done, and if you're in a restaurant it alerts the server to remove your plate.

1. Wansink, Brian and Junyong Kim. *Bad Popcorn in Big Buckets: Portion Size Can Influence Intake as Much as Taste.* *J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2005;37:24-30.
 2. Burton-Freeman, Britt et al. *Plasma cholecystokinin is associated with subjective measures of satiety in women.* *Am J Clin Nutr* 2002;76:659-67.
 3. http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-04/cfb-nst042610.php

Portion Size Your Plate

Instead of filling your plate with a large portion of meat and potatoes, try a new way of eating. This concept encourages the intake of more plant-based foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans which are rich in nutrients and naturally low in calories. When these foods fill up your plate, you can eat larger, more satisfying meals with fewer calories than a typical American diet. Below is a picture of what your "new" plate would look like. You'll see that $\frac{2}{3}$ of the plate contains vegetables, fruits and whole grains and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the plate contains a lean protein food. Switching to this way of eating will help improve your health and protect you against many chronic diseases.

$\frac{2}{3}$ (or more)
vegetables,
fruits, whole
grains & beans



$\frac{1}{3}$ (or less)
lean protein

key goals

Using the tips in this module, develop 2 – 3 goals to work towards.

1.

2.

3.

Resources

Just Enough For You: About Food Portions. Controlling your weight calls for more than just choosing a healthy variety of foods. It also calls for looking at how much and how often you eat. This brochure from the National Institutes of Health shows you how to use serving sizes to help you eat just enough for you. http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/just_enough.htm

View a Portion Control Slide Show at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/portion-control/NU00267>

Simple Secrets to Portion Control and Healthy Eating. Want to lose weight -- or maintain a healthy weight? Practicing portion control will ensure you don't supersize your servings and help you control the amount of food you eat. One way to see how much food should be in a serving is to check the Nutrition Facts label and measure it out. But that's not always practical. This site will help you "eyeball" your food to gauge what's too much -- and what's just right.

<http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/nutrition-labels-9/serving-sizes-slideshow>

The WebMD Portion Size Plate: Portion control is a critical part of successful weight loss and weight management. The WebMD Portion Size Plate gives you easy-to-understand guidelines to help you avoid some common portion-size pitfalls. You can also find printable fridge and wallet size portion guides at this site. <http://www.webmd.com/diet/healthtool-portion-size-plate>

A wealth of nutrition information about the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. You can create a personalized eating plan and use many interactive tools at www.MyPyramid.gov

The New American Plate Cookbook includes over 200 plant-based recipes, each one crafted by a team of chefs, "foodies" and nutrition experts.

http://www.aicr.org/site/PageServer?pagename=reduce_diet_new_american_plate_cookbook

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OPTI-11281-1210