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Are you eating the right portions?

Provided by: US Department of Health and Human Services

Portion sizes are increasing almost everywhere we turn - at the grocery store, at restaurants, at home and at the movies. Studies show that when faced with larger portions, people inadvertently consume more calories which can lead to weight gain. There are ways that you can control your portions. Read more about many ways that portion control can help you toward a healthier lifestyle.

Serving Size



Many restaurants serve more food than one person needs at one meal. Take control of the amount of food that ends up on your plate by splitting an entrée with a friend. Or, ask the wait person for a "to-go" box and wrap up half your meal as soon as it's brought to the table. If you order an entrée, take the leftovers home, refrigerate and enjoy another meal or a snack tomorrow.

Eat Your Fast Food on a Plate:

When you order fast food, picture the food on a plate. Even better, take it home and put it on a plate. You may be

surprised at how full the plate looks, so next time try a smaller size.

Order Smaller Portions of Fast Food and Take-Out

- Try fast food options such as smaller burgers, grilled chicken sandwiches or salads with low-calorie dressings, cups or bags of fresh fruit, low-fat milk, 100% fruit juice and bottled water.
- Look for low sodium options.
- At sandwich shops, ask for leaner cuts and smaller amounts of roast beef, turkey, or ham; extra lettuce and tomato; and whole-wheat, oatmeal, or multigrain bread.
- When dining out, order a light appetizer instead of an entrée.

Drinks Count Too!

- Try drinking a glass of water before your meal.
- Try making your own iced tea with honey, instead of white sugar.
- Instead of an alcoholic beverage, try a diet soda, or club soda with fresh lemon or lime. You will consume less calories.
- Try mixing 100% fresh fruit with club soda for a refreshing alternative to soda or packaged drinks.





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- You can make your own lemonade with fresh lemons, sparkling water, and honey instead of sugar.

Go Ahead - Spoil Your Dinner

We learned as children not to snack before a meal for fear of "spoiling our dinner." Well, it's time to forget that old rule. If you feel hungry between meals, eat a healthy snack, like a piece of fruit or small salad, to avoid overeating during your next meal.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

Make your home a "portion friendly zone." Store especially tempting foods, like cookies, chips, or ice cream, out of immediate eyesight, like on a high shelf or at the back of a freezer. People tend to consume more when they have easy access to food.

Portion Size vs. Serving Size

Remember that a portion size is the amount of a single food item served in a single eating occasion, normally a meal or a snack. People often confuse portion size with serving size, which is a standard unit of measuring foods (a cup or an ounce are good examples). Portion size is the amount offered in the packaging of prepared foods, or the amount a person chooses to put on his or her plate.

For example, bagels or muffins are often sold in sizes that constitute at least 2 servings, but consumers often eat the whole thing, thinking that they have eaten 1 serving. They do not realize that



they have selected a large portion size that was more than 1 serving. Portion sizes have increased over time, so make sure you check the serving size on the label.

Portion Control When Eating In

If your first portion is big enough, avoid going back for more. Consume alcoholic beverages in moderation, if at all.

- The smaller your plate, the smaller your portion. Eat your meals at home on a smaller plate.

- Before going back for seconds, wait 10 or 15 minutes. You might not want seconds after all.

Portion Control In Front of the TV

When eating or snacking in front of the TV, put the amount that you plan to eat into a bowl or container instead of eating straight from the package. It's easy to overeat when your attention is focused on something else.

- Buy or portion out treats and snacks in small bags or packages.
- Portion sizes are key especially for once-in-a-while foods such as treats, sweets and drinks.

Be Aware of Large Packages

The larger the package, the more people consume without realizing it.

- Portion out your snack on a plate, not from the bag, to stay aware of how much you're eating.



- Divide up the contents of one large package into several smaller containers to help avoid over-consumption.

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