Creating Health & Nutrition
Size Up Your Portions

Tip
Use a smaller plate to help you limit your food portions.

Nutrition Information
Do you know how much food you eat? Being aware of your portion sizes can help you control your weight and maintain a healthy eating pattern, as recommended by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines (based on current nutrition research). Here are a few terms to keep in mind:

- **Food serving**—a standard amount of food listed on the Nutrition Facts panel of a food package as defined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the United States Department of Agriculture. In 2018 these will be changed to reflect more typically consumed sizes.

- **Food portion**—the amount of food that you are served in a restaurant or at home. You can compare your food portions to USDA’s MyPlate food group amounts (see ChooseMyPlate.gov), which are measured in cups or ounces.

Portion sizes of many foods have grown dramatically in the past few decades. Studies also show that most Americans eat whatever amount is put in front of them. These facts make it important to know your portion sizes. There are no right or wrong portion sizes, but eating “reasonable” portion sizes will help you keep or work toward a healthy weight.

Consider this example for a woman following 1,800 calories based on USDA’s healthy meal plans and eating a spaghetti dinner. At 1,800 calories, the grain group allowance is 6 ounces.

2 cups cooked spaghetti = 4 ounces from grain group

(½ cup cooked spaghetti = 1 ounce)

2 ounces from the grain group are available for the rest of the day.

By being aware of the amount of spaghetti typically eaten, she can plan to limit her grains to 2 ounces for the rest of the day. This will allow her to stay at 6 ounces of grains for her 1,800-calorie plan, or she may decide to reduce the amount of spaghetti she eats and eat the grains saved at another meal.

The serving size on the Nutrition Facts panel is not a recommended amount to eat. It is based on a reference or standard amount that most people eat of a specific category of food, such as cookies. This standard serving size lets the manufacturer...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving size</th>
<th>Calories</th>
<th>Nutrients to limit</th>
<th>Carbohydrates</th>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Nutrients to increase</th>
<th>Percent Daily Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serving Size 1 cup (228g)</td>
<td>Calorie</td>
<td>Total Fat 12g 18%</td>
<td>Total Carbohydrate 31g 10%</td>
<td>Protein 5g</td>
<td>Vitamin A 4%</td>
<td>Calorie: 2,000 2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories 250</td>
<td>Saturated Fat 3g 15%</td>
<td>Dietary Fiber 0g</td>
<td>Vitamin C 2%</td>
<td>Calcium 20%</td>
<td>Iron 4%</td>
<td>Total Fat Less than 10g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
express the nutrients in that food so they can be compared with similar products. For instance, you can compare the saturated fat in two types of cookies since they have very similar serving sizes by weight. This is useful if, for example, you are trying to reduce the saturated fat in your diet.

Use MyPlate’s recommended food portion sizes as a guide. They are measured in either ounces or cups. The amount in parentheses after each group listed below is what’s recommended for an 1,800-calorie diet for the entire day for ages 14 and up. Knowing these standardized food amounts for your calorie level can help with weight control.

Grains (6 ounces equivalent)
1 ounce equals
• 1 slice bread
• 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal
• ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal

Vegetables (2½ cups)
1 cup counts as
• 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables
• 1 cup 100 percent vegetable juice
• 1 cup cooked dry beans
• 2 cups raw leafy greens

Fruits (1½ cups)
1 cup counts as
• 1 cup cut-up fruit

Dairy (3 cups)
1 cup counts as
• 1 cup milk
• 1 cup yogurt
• 1½ ounces hard cheese
• 2 ounces processed cheese
• 1 cup fortified soy beverage

Protein (5 ounces)
1 ounce equals
• 1 ounce meat, poultry, or fish
• ¼ cup cooked dry beans
• 1 egg
• 1 tablespoon peanut butter
• ½ ounce nuts or seeds

Limit
• Sodium to 2,300 milligrams a day
• Saturated fat to 20 grams a day
• Added sugars to 45 grams a day

Measure It
When eating away from home, use the palm of your hand to estimate portion sizes. In general, a woman’s palm or two-thirds of a man’s palm is equal to 3 ounces or ½ cup.

When you are at home, place the amount of food you usually eat on a plate. Then measure it to find out your portion size. After you have done this a few times, your “eye” will tell you the size of the portion.

Test your knowledge of how portion sizes have changed and how many calories need to be burned to make up the difference at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/portion-distortion.htm.

My Goal:

Examine Your Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>What I do now</th>
<th>What I plan to change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Pasta</td>
<td>Spaghetti and meatballs</td>
<td>Eat 2 cups or more with 3 large meatballs (1,020 calories)</td>
<td>Measure 1 cup of pasta with 3 small meatballs (500 calories) and learn to eyeball this size for for the future so I don’t overeat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources


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extension.psu.edu

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