

Lesson 6 *The Biggest Loser*

Size Up Your Servings

Part of learning to make wise food choices for improved health is to eat the recommended amount of foods from each of the food groups. But, how much should you eat? If you get confused about serving sizes, you are not alone. Adding to the confusion is the "super-sized" portions you find at restaurants that have almost become the norm.

While the terms portion and serving are used interchangeably, they are not the same thing. A "**serving**" is a unit of measure to describe the amount of food recommended from each food group. To establish the recommended serving sizes, four factors were considered:

- typical portion sizes based on food consumption surveys
- ease of use of that quantity of food
- nutrient content of the food
- tradition (use of food and serving sizes in previous food guides)

A "**portion**" is defined as the amount of a specific food that you choose to eat for a meal or snack. A portion can be larger or smaller than the recommended serving size from MyPyramid. If extra pounds have crept on your body in the past 5 or 10 years, you may wonder what happened. You think you're eating about the same amount of food. For many people, the portion sizes of many commonly eaten foods have doubled, or more, in calories. Here are some examples of what has happened to common portions.

Food	1989 Size & Calories	Today's Size & Calories
Bagel	3 inches; 140 calories	6 inches; 350 calories
Cheeseburger	333 calories	590 calories
French Fries	2.4 oz., 210 calories	6.9 oz., 610 calories
Soda	6.5 oz., 85 calories	20 oz., 250 calories
Spaghetti/Meatballs	1 cup pasta, 500 calories	2 cups pasta, 1025 calories
Pizza	500 calories	850 calories
Movie Popcorn	270 calories	630 calories

When you take in lots of extra calories because the portions you eat are over-sized, you'll have to burn up a lot more calories through exercise or other physical activity or you'll soon also be over-sized. Just 10 extra calories per day translates into one pound of weight gained in a year.

Strategies to Avoid Portion Distortion

1. Learn what a recommended serving looks like. Sometimes it helps to equate a serving size with a familiar item. You've probably heard that a 3 oz. serving of meat is about the size of a deck of cards or the palm or your hand, but what about other foods? Rather than eliminating a food you like because you think it has too many calories, maybe you just need to eat the recommended serving size.

Here are examples of appropriate serving sizes related to common items in your home.

1 baked potato = a computer mouse

1 apple or orange = baseball

1 cookie = poker chip

1/2 cup ice cream = tennis ball

1 cup of pasta = size of an average clenched fist

1 pancake = a 4" CD Rom

1 slice of bread = cassette tape

1 tortilla = 7" salad or dessert plate

1 muffin = 1 large egg

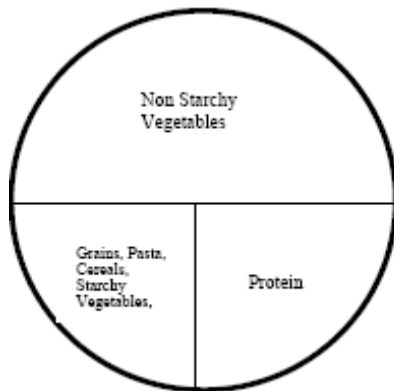
1 glass of milk = 8 ounces (1 cup)

1 teaspoon of butter or peanut butter = tip of your thumb to first joint

1 oz. nuts = the indenture in the palm of your cupped hand

Looking at these amounts, did you discover that your serving sizes are a little too large? Start to become more aware of the amount of food you eat. By selecting appropriate quantities you may be able to reduce your calories by 20% and still get the nutrients needed for good health.

2. Check out the size of your plates. One reason we don't realize we're eating larger portions is because the plates we're eating from have also grown larger. In the 60's dinner plates were about 9 inches in size. Today, the plates you buy are closer to 12 inches in size. When you fill up today's dinner plate, you may be consuming 40 to 50% more calories.



You might try using ***The Plate Method*** as a way to learn how to plan meals around appropriate serving sizes. Using a ***9-inch*** plate (or figuring out where 9 inches would be on your dinner plate), draw an imaginary line through the center of the plate from left to right. Then draw a second line from the center line to the bottom of the plate dividing the bottom half into 2 parts. To plan your meal, fill one quarter section with 3 ounces of meat or other protein. In the other quarter section of the plate, add 1 serving of grains, cereals, pasta, and/or starchy vegetables (i.e. potatoes, corn, peas). The top half of the plate is filled with non-starchy vegetables (salads, peppers, tomatoes, etc. Add one serving (1/2 cup) of fruit juice and one serving of dairy foods.

Using ***The Plate Method*** you can look at a meal you're eating and see if you have the necessary daily nutrients in the recommended serving sizes. A meal using this method will have about 650 calories, or about 1/3 of the average 2000 calorie diet. If you are very active and need more than 2000 calories, you can add more servings or have a healthy snack between meals.

References:

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Nutrition Insight 22, Serving Sizes in the Food Guide Pyramid and on the Nutrition Facts Label: What's Different and Why, USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, www.cnpp.usda.gov

"Idaho Plate Method", www.platemethod.com

A Healthier Weigh, CSU Extension, Logan and Morgan counties and Golden Plains Area