

perfect portions

Over the past several decades, Americans have become heavier and heavier. Many things account for this gradual weight gain, including less physical activity and a higher intake of calories. Reducing consumption of calories can help to prevent weight gain and to promote weight loss. In order to reduce calories, it is important to know how many calories are consumed. Calorie awareness can be achieved by reading the nutrition facts panel and understanding portion sizes.

Sizing up Portions

Most people do not realize that "serving size" and "portion size" are not always the same. Remember that the Nutrition Facts panel defines a **serving size** of food. All the information on the panel refers to serving size but a **portion size** is the amount of food that one selects to eat, which may be larger or smaller than the serving size and will therefore have a different amount of calories and other nutrients.

A Picture is Worth 1,000 Words

Sometimes it is hard to tell how much a serving of a certain food is. The illustrations below show how the same portion looks in different sized containers, different forms (i.e. sliced, cubed, whole) and different dispersions (i.e. mound, covering a plate). This can help you understand the importance of paying close attention to how much you are really eating.

Plate with
2 cups of rice
in a mound



Plate with
2 cups of rice
dispersed across

6 oz. tall,
narrow glass
of juice



12 oz. short,
wide glass
of juice

Three 1 oz.
cubes of
cheese
on a plate



Three 1 oz. slices
of cheese
on a plate

2 cups
of pasta in
a large bowl



1 cup
of pasta in
a smaller bowl

1 cup =  Baseball

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup =  Tennis Ball

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup =  Computer Mouse

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup =  Egg

3 oz. =  Deck of Cards

2 tablespoons =  Ping Pong Ball



After looking at the different portion sizes, see the illustration at the right to see how a different portion size can affect how many calories you eat.

In this example, the container size, form, and dispersion directly impact the portion size selected. Double the portion means double the calories and fat. It is important to choose smaller portions that are still satisfying and to create an environment that encourages one to do so.

1 cup of yogurt with
1/4 cup of
granola on top
in a cup

300 calories
11 grams of total fat
3.5 grams of
saturated fat



2 cups of yogurt with
1/2 cup of granola
blended
in a bowl

600 calories
23 grams of total fat
7 grams of
saturated fat



*Calculated from the USDA Nutrient Database Release 22

Portion-Proof Your Environment

Here are some tips to help you to control portions of meals and snacks:

At Home:

- ▶ Don't eat directly out of a package or container. Always portion it out first.
- ▶ Use smaller plates, bowls, forks and spoons for your meals and snacks.
- ▶ Keep the serving dish in the kitchen. You will be less likely to serve yourself additional portions if the food is in another room rather than at the table right in front of you.

At Restaurants:

- ▶ Order an appetizer as an entrée or split an entrée with your dining partner.
- ▶ Portions at restaurants are often very large. When the food arrives, decide how much you will eat and only eat that amount.
- ▶ Ask the waiter to put half of what you ordered into a 'doggie bag' before the food is brought to the table. You'll be less tempted and you'll get two meals for the price of one!

At Work:

- ▶ Schedule meals and snacks into your calendar so you don't get so busy that you go hours without eating, which may put you at risk for overeating when you finally find time to eat.
- ▶ Store midday snacks in your workplace kitchen rather than directly in your office. This will reduce the likelihood of "desktop dining" when you aren't really hungry.
- ▶ Always bring an afternoon snack with you to work to help refuel when that 4:00 p.m. slump hits. That way, you won't be tempted by unhealthy options.

