



Portion Sizes

Have you ever measured out the food you are about to eat? Do you know what a portion or serving size really looks like? If you answered “no” to both of these questions, don’t feel bad, it simply means you are typical of most Americans. The problem is that in our ignorance we are consuming far more calories than we are aware of.

Take restaurant food as an example. If you divide the typical restaurant portion by about three, you will have something close to an FDA recommended serving. This is particularly true of what you are served as a main course and a starchy side dish (i.e. - potato, pasta, rice, etc.). Remember that restaurants want to convey a sense of value to their product, sometimes this is in the form of larger portions and more food. Unfortunately, the bill isn’t being paid just in terms of dollars and cents, your waistline helps pick up the tab as well. What to do? Here are some suggestions to help keep your portion sizes in check:

- **Eat in** - as often as possible. Allows you to control the preparation and portion sizes of your meal.
- **Invest in a Food Scale** - an inexpensive and simple way to know exactly how many calories you are consuming. Be ready for a surprise when you start measuring out packaged carbohydrates like cereal, rice, and pasta; that two ounce recommended serving of dry pasta containing 210 calories isn’t much food.
- **Use smaller plates, bowls, and glasses** - helps make a smaller amount of food seem like more. Some “veterans” will even use smaller silverware.
- **When Eating Out** - have your server bring a take home container with your meal. Before eating, divide your portions by placing at least half in the take home container. Take the rest home and have it for your lunch or dinner the following day. You can also ask if ordering a half portion is an option. Most restaurants will allow you to split your meal with a dining companion for a minimal or no charge.

While it’s fairly simple to measure out pre-packaged foods, particularly if you have your **food scale** or measuring cups, what about items that do not fall in that category, i.e. “whole” foods, or restaurant meals that are already prepared? Here are some guidelines:

Protein

- For all meats, including poultry and fish - a serving would fit in the palm of your hand, and be about as thick as a deck of cards.
- 1/2 cup non or low fat cottage cheese
- 4-6 egg whites or the equivalent in an egg substitute.
- 4 ounces soybeans or tofu.

Super Proteins

- 2 whole eggs (poached, soft boiled, or scrambled retains the most nutrients)
- 4 ounces salmon, or use the palm of your hand/thick as a deck of cards method.

Starchy Carbohydrates

- Use your clenched fist for items such as baked potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, and yams.
- 1 slice bread or 1/2 bagel made from multi or whole grain. **Avoid** products made with refined wheat flour, hydrogenated oils, or high fructose corn syrup.
- 2/3 cup oatmeal, cream of wheat, or other hot cereal.
- 1/2 cup cooked rice
- 1/2 cup cooked pasta
- 2/3 cup shredded wheat squares or other whole grain dry cereal (no sugar or added fruit)
- 1/2 cup cooked peas or beans
- 8 ounces plain nonfat yogurt or skim milk.

Vegetables

- Fist sized
- One cup cut, chopped, or shredded.
- 2 cups mixed salad greens

Fruits

- One piece for items such as bananas, oranges, apples, pears, nectarines, etc.
- One cup mixed fruit or berries.
- 8 ounce 100% juice. **Limit** juice to one serving per day.
- 1/4 cup raisins or other dried fruit

Fats

- One tablespoon oil
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1/2 medium avocado
- One tablespoon (level it off!) non-hydrogenated, no-sugar added peanut butter
- Or enough raw nuts to fill the palm of your hand, not including your fingers, and in a single layer.
- One ounce unprocessed, hard white cheese from the brick

Water

- 8 ounce glass.

Adding It All Up

Using the portion sizes outlined, let's take a look at how they would factor in to your daily caloric needs.

Portions Required

Calories	Protein	Starchy Carbs	Vegetable	Fruit	Fat
1200	2	3	2	2	2
1800	3	4	2	2	3
			OR		
	3	3	3	3	3
2400	4	5	3	4	3
			OR		
	4	4	3	4	4
3000	5	6	4	4	4

These portion sizes outlined are for apparently healthy individuals and should be used only as a suggested starting point. For individuals with specific needs, it is always best to first consult your physician and/or a registered dietician.