

Health Promotion in Motion

Portion Size Pitfalls

Wherever you turn, portion sizes are big – and bigger. Research shows that people eat more food than they intend when they are served large portions. Try these tips to avoid portion size pitfalls.

Go Ahead, Spoil Your Dinner

We learned as children to not 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.

Portion Control in Front of the TV

It’s easy to overeat when your attention is focused on something else. 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.

Portion Control When Eating Out

Many restaurants serve more food than one person needs at one meal. You can take control of situation. Try one of these ideas:

- Split a meal with a friend.
- When you place your order, ask the wait person for a “to-go” box and wrap up half your meal as soon as it’s brought to the table.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

People tend to eat more when they have easy access to food. Make your home and your cubicle “portion friendly zones.”

- Replace the candy dish with a fruit bowl.
- Store tempting foods, like cookies, chips, or ice cream, out of view. Place them on a high shelf or at the back of the freezer. Move the healthier food to the front at eye level.
- If you shop in bulk, store excess foods in a place that’s not convenient to get to, such as a high cabinet or at the back of the pantry.

Be Aware of Large Packages

The larger the food package, the more people eat from it without realizing it.

- To avoid overeating, don’t eat straight from the large package.
- When you bring the bag home from the store, divide the contents into several smaller containers or zip bags.
- Serve the food in the zip bags or small containers. If you get another container you will be reminded of how much you have eaten.



Read Nutrition Labels Closely

All packaged foods are required by law to provide a Nutrition Facts label. At the top of that label, you can find out how many servings are in the package. Sometimes, a package has more than one serving. This is often true of snack foods and beverages.

Nutrition Facts Label	
Serving Size	8 fl.oz.
Servings per container	2.5
Amount per serving	
Calories	100

This sample label is from a 20-ounce soft drink bottle.

It shows that one serving is 8 fluid ounces and that the container holds 2.5 servings.

$$8 \text{ ounces} \times 2\frac{1}{2} = 20 \text{ ounces}$$

The same label tells us that one serving (8 ounces) provides 100 calories. That means if you drink one 20-ounce bottle, the total calories would be 250.

$$100 \text{ calories} \times 2\frac{1}{2} = 250 \text{ calories}$$

Half Your Plate

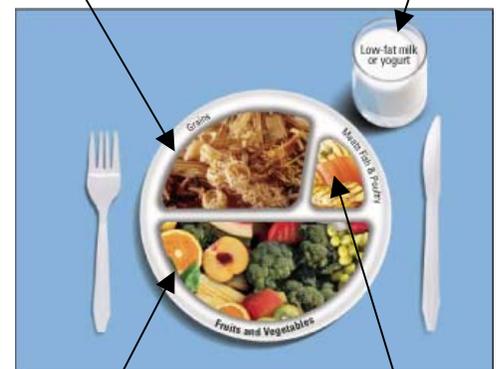
Filling up on fruits and vegetables will help you eat less calories and prevent weight gain. Compared to most other foods, fruits and vegetables are low in calories. That's because they are high in fiber and water. Most fruits and veggies have no fat. To increase your fruit and veggie intake . . .

- Prepare two vegetables for dinner.
- Serve a salad with dinner or have a large salad as your main course.
- Cook up a vegetable soup as a first course.
- Make fruits and vegetables your first choice for snacks.

For More Portion Size Tips

- **The Portion Distortion Quiz**
<http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion>
- **How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label**
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/foodlab.html>
- **Test Your Food Label Knowledge (Quiz)**
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flquiz1.html>
- **Take the NHLBI Visual Reality Quiz**
<http://www.nhlbisupport.com/chd1/visualreality/visualreality.htm>
- **Serving Size Wallet Card**
<http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion/servingcard7.pdf>
- **Contact the Health Promotion Program in the NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health Services (271-4551) for free copies of these brochures:**
 - [How to avoid portion size pitfalls to help manage your weight.](#)
 - [Rethink your drink.](#)

Grains (at least half whole grains) Low-fat milk or yogurt



Low-fat meat, fish, or poultry
Fruits and vegetables