

# Portion Control Fact Sheet

It's important to pay attention to the portions of food you eat because of the effect on your weight. There are a variety of ways to keep track of portions. The Hand Method is often used by dietitians to help people think about portions. Another method is to "eyeball" the food on a plate and compare it to another visual reference, like a deck of cards. When preparing food at home, you can use measuring tools. Each method is described below followed by a list of portion sizes of some common foods. It may be hard at first to pay attention to portion size, but with time and practice, it will get easier!

## Hand Method

A thumb is about the size of 1 ounce of food. Your palm is about the size of 3 ounces of food or one serving of meat. Your fist is equivalent to 1 cup or 8 ounces. For example, a portion of rice as large as your fist is equal to about three servings of rice. The tip of your thumb is the same size as a teaspoon. Using the thumb tip is a good way to keep track of fat portions, such as the amount of margarine that counts as one serving.

## Visual References

Here are some common items to use as visual references for portions. A deck of cards is the same size as a 3-ounce serving of meat, the recommended amount for a meal. A golf ball is the size of a single ounce of meat. A tennis ball is about the size of a healthy serving of fruit. Four dice equals 1 ounce of cheese. Invent your own visual references for your favorite foods to help with portion control.

## Measuring Tools

Measure solid foods such as rice, pasta, or vegetables in a dry measuring cup, which is different from a liquid measuring cup. Measure cooked foods after cooking. Use measuring spoons for fats such as oil, margarine, and salad dressings. Do not use tableware to measure because it may be inaccurate. Use measuring tools to find out how much the cup, glass, and other pieces of dishware you use actually hold. Notice how a serving of food, such as 3 ounces of meat or 1/3 cup of cooked pasta, looks on the plate or bowl you typically use.

| Hand                                      | Visual                                     | Measuring Tools                        |
|---|--|--|
| 1 baked potato = fist                     | 2 Tbsp peanut butter = ping pong ball      | <i>Liquids</i>                         |
| 1 ounce of chips or pretzels = 2 handfuls | 3 ounces of cooked meat = deck of cards    | 1 cup = 8 ounces fat-free or 1% milk   |
| 1 ounce of nuts = thumb                   | 1 piece of cornbread = bar of soap         | ½ cup of canned fruit (no sugar added) |
| 1 serving of fat (margarine) = thumb      | 1 serving of bread = one slice             | ½ cup juice                            |
| 3 ounces of meat (one serving) = palm     | ½ cup cooked broccoli = scoop of ice cream | <i>Solids</i>                          |
| 1 serving of vegetable = 1 handful        | 1½ ounces of cheese = 3 dominoes           | ¼ cup of dried fruit                   |
|   | Medium piece of fruit = baseball           | ¾ cup dry unsweetened cereal           |
|   | 1 ounce of cheese = 4 dice                 | ½ cup yams or peas                     |
|   | ½ bagel = hockey puck                      | 1/3 cup cooked pasta or rice           |

Getting into the habit of controlling your portion sizes isn't as hard as you might think. It all comes down to finding ways to cut calories while continuing to eat the foods you enjoy. So here are seven ways to cut back on super-sized servings and pare down your portions.

### **1. Meet yourself half-way.**

You can cut the calories of your favorite foods by 50% without changing anything about them -- just eat half. For example, if you usually eat a deli sandwich at lunch, eat half it, but replace your chips with carrot sticks. Still hungry? Before you reach for the rest of your sandwich, munch on a piece of fruit. Produce takes longer to eat and digest than other foods, which means you'll have more time to notice you're getting full. Plus, the added fiber in both the carrots and fruit will help you feel more satisfied, for much longer, than chips would have.

When you are dining at a restaurant, ask the waiter for a take-out container as soon as he gets your order. Put half of your meal in the box as soon as it arrives. Try to eat slowly and enjoy the conversation and the restaurant's ambiance. Remember, it takes about 20 minutes to start to feel full, so eating at a slower pace will prevent you from overeating. You can always take some of the food back out of the carton at the restaurant if you're still truly hungry, but chances are you won't want to.

### **2. Downsize your dinner.**

If heating up leftovers the next day isn't your cup of tea, find out if your eatery offers lunch-sized portions of their dishes. These are almost always significantly smaller than full-sized dinner entrees, so don't be afraid to ask if you can purchase the lunch entree at dinner time. If that's not an option, ask to order from the children's menu ... practicing this portion control pointer will save your waistline some inches and your wallet some bucks.

### **3. Resist the "upsized" offer.**

As we all know, fast food portions are already oversized, so there's no need to add insult to injury by upgrading your meal. No matter how much of a "better deal" it may seem, don't be tempted. In fact, steering clear of "meal deals" altogether is very wise. You're much better off ordering a grilled chicken sandwich, or even a regular hamburger (hold the mayo on both), along with a side salad, than ordering a combo that comes with a silo-sized soda, too. Kids meals are a good alternative at fast food restaurants; they contain what *were* considered normal-sized portions for us grown-ups a few decades ago.

### **4. Good portions come in small packages.**

If you find your will power is overpowered by a full bag of potato chips sitting in the pantry, don't buy the large bags. Get the individual lunch-sized bags one at a time. (Just don't buy the 12-bag assortment box of chips if you think you'll be tempted to finish off the entire box in a sitting. Mini bags of chips are three for \$1 at my grocer, so that is exactly what I limit myself to.) If you're budget-minded, go ahead and buy the full-size bag and divvy out the chips into single serving zipper bags as soon as you get them home; you'll still be much more likely to keep yourself in check than if you were eating from the bag.

## 5. Size up servings.

Just how many of those chips are in a serving? Check the nutrition label to find out -- you may be surprised at how small an actual serving looks compared to what you usually eat. Learn what a serving is of your favorite snacks; start by measuring them out the next few times you eat them. Once you get into the habit of seeing how much a serving really looks like, you'll eventually be able to "eyeball" servings and know how much is too much.

## 6. Be gone, buffets!

My family is the gotta-love-a-bargain sort and going to a buffet used to be a weekly habit. (What could be better than all the food you want at one flat price?) I used to think I could tag along and still keep myself in check by sheer determination. The reality? I have to avoid buffets like the plague. Frankly, it is nearly impossible to practice portion control in an "all-you-can-eat" situation. If you've ever left a buffet feeling sick, just think about how you felt the next time you're tempted to gorge... that's what I do when I feel guilty about not going along.

## 7. Compare to control.

A really nifty way of learning to control portions is to mentally compare them with common, every day objects that you are used to seeing. Some of the reminders I use are that three ounces of meat is the size of a deck of cards or an audio tape; one ounce of meat is the size of a matchbook; and one cup of potatoes, rice or pasta looks like a tennis ball.

# Decode Food Labels

**Look closely at what you're eating—it may be healthier than you think**

If the **food industry** was honest about what they put in your food, you wouldn't need *Eat This, Not That!* But the fact is there's a lot hiding in what you eat. Basic nutritional guidelines are helpful—excess **fat and calories**, bad; **protein and fiber**, good—but some of the most crucial health information isn't at the top of your food label.

Unpronounceable **artificial ingredients** are nothing but bad news, and familiar things like salt and sugar also pack a punch. The **saltiest dish in America** contains almost three times your daily allotment of sodium, and can put you at risk for high blood pressure and stroke. **Sugar-laden foods** are equally bad for your body—too much of the sweet stuff sends your blood sugar skyrocketing and can up your risk for diabetes. So the next time you're **food shopping**, read the fine print on these labels, and choose a healthy alternative:

## Health Tip: Reading Food Labels

- Reading and understanding the nutrition facts label on food products can help you maintain a well-balanced diet that contains healthy amounts of fat and calories.

Here are guidelines to help you interpret food labels, courtesy of the American Academy of Family Physicians:

- Pay attention to the serving size -- usually the first line on the label. The serving size is the manufacturer's estimate of how much a person is likely to eat at one time. If you eat more than the serving size, be sure to increase the label's other values accordingly.
- The percent daily value shows, for each ingredient, how much of that ingredient's recommended daily amount you are getting in each serving.
- Limit foods with unhealthy amounts of saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.
- Favor foods with healthy fiber, vitamins and minerals.



Question: You are shopping for milk and trying to decide if you want to buy whole milk or non-fat milk. You are watching your weight and you want to save calories. Which type of milk has fewer calories?

| Whole Milk   |           |                   |        |
|--|-----------|-------------------|--------|
| Nutrition Facts  |           |                   |        |
| Serving Size 1 cup (240ml)   |           |                   |        |
| Servings Per Container 8   |           |                   |        |
| Amount Per Serving   |           |                   |        |
| <b>Calories</b>  | 150       | Calories from Fat | 70     |
| % Daily Value*   |           |                   |        |
| <b>Total Fat</b>   | 8g        |                   | 12%    |
| Saturated Fat  | 5g        |                   | 25%    |
| Trans Fat  | 0g        |                   |        |
| <b>Cholesterol</b>   | 35mg      |                   | 12%    |
| <b>Sodium</b>  | 125mg     |                   | 5%     |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b>  | 12g       |                   | 4%     |
| Dietary Fiber  | 0g        |                   | 4%     |
| Sugars   | 12g       |                   |        |
| <b>Protein</b>   | 8g        |                   |        |
| <b>Vitamin A</b>   | 15%       | <b>Calcium</b>    | 30%    |
| <b>Vitamin C</b>   | 2%        | <b>Iron</b>       | 0%     |
| <b>Vitamin D</b>   | 25%       |                   |        |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs. |           |                   |        |
|  | Calories  | 2000              | 2500   |
| Total Fat  | Less than | 65g               | 80g    |
| Sat Fat  | Less than | 20g               | 25g    |
| Cholesterol  | Less than | 300mg             | 300mg  |
| Sodium   | Less than | 2,400m            | 2400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate   |           | 300g              | 375g   |
| Dietary Fiber  |           | 25g               | 30g    |

| Non Fat Milk   |           |                   |        |
|--|-----------|-------------------|--------|
| Nutrition Facts  |           |                   |        |
| Serving Size 1 cup (240ml)   |           |                   |        |
| Servings Per Container 8   |           |                   |        |
| Amount Per Serving   |           |                   |        |
| <b>Calories</b>  | 90        | Calories from Fat | 0      |
| % Daily Value*   |           |                   |        |
| <b>Total Fat</b>   | 0g        |                   | 0%     |
| Saturated Fat  | 0g        |                   | 0%     |
| Trans Fat  | 0g        |                   |        |
| <b>Cholesterol</b>   | 5mg       |                   | 2%     |
| <b>Sodium</b>  | 125mg     |                   | 5%     |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b>  | 13g       |                   | 4%     |
| Dietary Fiber  | 0g        |                   | 4%     |
| Sugars   | 12g       |                   |        |
| <b>Protein</b>   | 8g        |                   |        |
| <b>Vitamin A</b>   | 10%       | <b>Calcium</b>    | 30%    |
| <b>Vitamin C</b>   | 2%        | <b>Iron</b>       | 0%     |
| <b>Vitamin D</b>   | 25%       |                   |        |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs. |           |                   |        |
|  | Calories  | 2000              | 2500   |
| Total Fat  | Less than | 65g               | 80g    |
| Sat Fat  | Less than | 20g               | 25g    |
| Cholesterol  | Less than | 300mg             | 300mg  |
| Sodium   | Less than | 2,400m            | 2400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate   |           | 300g              | 375g   |
| Dietary Fiber  |           | 25g               | 30g    |

- Non-fat milk       Whole milk

Question: One serving of stuffing is about one ounce. Although it is not on the label, that one ounce is about equal to 1/2 cup of prepared stuffing. Which has more vitamins per serving, 2/3 cup of mixed vegetables or one half cup of stuffing?

| Frozen Vegetable Blend   |           |                   |        |
|--|-----------|-------------------|--------|
| Nutrition Facts  |           |                   |        |
| Serving Size 2/3 cup (85g)   |           |                   |        |
| Servings Per Container about 3.5   |           |                   |        |
| Amount Per Serving   |           |                   |        |
| <b>Calories</b>  | 25        | Calories from Fat | 0      |
| % Daily Value*   |           |                   |        |
| <b>Total Fat</b>   | 0g        |                   | 0%     |
| Saturated Fat  | 0g        |                   | 0%     |
| Trans Fat  | 0g        |                   |        |
| <b>Cholesterol</b>   | 0mg       |                   |        |
| <b>Sodium</b>  | 25mg      |                   | 1%     |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b>  | 5g        |                   | 2%     |
| Dietary Fiber  | 2g        |                   | 7%     |
| Sugars   | 2g        |                   |        |
| <b>Protein</b>   | 1g        |                   |        |
| <b>Vitamin A</b>   | 15%       | <b>Calcium</b>    | 2%     |
| <b>Vitamin C</b>   | 25%       | <b>Iron</b>       | 0%     |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs. |           |                   |        |
|  | Calories  | 2000              | 2500   |
| Total Fat  | Less than | 65g               | 80g    |
| Sat Fat  | Less than | 20g               | 25g    |
| Cholesterol  | Less than | 300mg             | 300mg  |
| Sodium   | Less than | 2,400m            | 2400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate   |           | 300g              | 375g   |
| Dietary Fiber  |           | 25g               | 30g    |

| Stuffing Mix   |           |                   |        |
|--|-----------|-------------------|--------|
| Nutrition Facts  |           |                   |        |
| Serving Size 28g   |           |                   |        |
| Servings Per Container about 6   |           |                   |        |
| Amount Per Serving   |           |                   |        |
| <b>Calories</b>  | 110       | Calories from Fat | 10     |
| % Daily Value*   |           |                   |        |
| <b>Total Fat</b>   | 1g        |                   | 2%     |
| Saturated Fat  | 0g        |                   | 0%     |
| Trans Fat  | 0g        |                   |        |
| <b>Cholesterol</b>   | 0mg       |                   |        |
| <b>Sodium</b>  | 430mg     |                   | 18%    |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b>  | 20g       |                   | 7%     |
| Dietary Fiber  | 1g        |                   | 3%     |
| Sugars   | 3g        |                   |        |
| <b>Protein</b>   | 4g        |                   |        |
| <b>Vitamin A</b>   | 0%        | <b>Calcium</b>    | 0%     |
| <b>Vitamin C</b>   | 0%        | <b>Iron</b>       | 6%     |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs. |           |                   |        |
|  | Calories  | 2000              | 2500   |
| Total Fat  | Less than | 65g               | 80g    |
| Sat Fat  | Less than | 20g               | 25g    |
| Cholesterol  | Less than | 300mg             | 300mg  |
| Sodium   | Less than | 2,400m            | 2400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate   |           | 300g              | 375g   |
| Dietary Fiber  |           | 25g               | 30g    |

- Frozen Vegetables       Stuffing

Question: You decide to make a peanut butter sandwich made with two slices of 100% whole grain bread and two tablespoons of peanut butter. How much protein is in this sandwich?

| 100% Whole Wheat Bread  |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Nutrition Facts   |                         |
| Serving Size 1 slice(28g)   |                         |
| Servings Per Container 20   |                         |
| Amount Per Serving  |                         |
| <b>Calories</b> 70  | Calories from Fat 10    |
| <b>% Daily Value*</b>   |                         |
| <b>Total Fat</b> 1g   | 1%                      |
| Saturated Fat 0g  | 0%                      |
| Trans Fat 0g  | 0%                      |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg  | 0%                      |
| <b>Sodium</b> 135mg   | 4%                      |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 13g   | 2%                      |
| Dietary Fiber 2g  | 7%                      |
| Sugars 2g   |                         |
| <b>Protein</b> 3g   |                         |
| <b>Vitamin A</b> 0%   | <b>Calcium</b> 6%       |
| <b>Vitamin C</b> 0%   | <b>Iron</b> 4%          |
| <b>Niacin</b> 20%   | <b>Vitamin E</b> 10%    |
| <b>Thiamin</b> 6%   | <b>Riboflavin</b> 2%    |
| <b>Folic Acid</b> 4%  |                         |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.                  |                         |
| Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs. |                         |
|   | Calories 2000 2500      |
| Total Fat   | Less than 65g 80g       |
| Sat Fat   | Less than 20g 25g       |
| Cholesterol   | Less than 300mg 300mg   |
| Sodium  | Less than 2,400m 2400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate  | 300g 375g               |
| Dietary Fiber   | 25g 30g                 |

| Creamy Peanut Butter  |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Nutrition Facts   |                         |
| Serving Size 2 Tbsp(32g)  |                         |
| Servings Per Container about 56   |                         |
| Amount Per Serving  |                         |
| <b>Calories</b> 190   | Calories from Fat 140   |
| <b>% Daily Value*</b>   |                         |
| <b>Total Fat</b> 17g  | 26%                     |
| Saturated Fat 3.5g  | 18%                     |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg  | 0%                      |
| <b>Sodium</b> 150mg   | 6%                      |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 7g  | 2%                      |
| Dietary Fiber 2g  | 8%                      |
| Sugars 3g   |                         |
| <b>Protein</b> 7g   |                         |
| <b>Vitamin A</b> 0%   | <b>Calcium</b> 0%       |
| <b>Vitamin C</b> 0%   | <b>Iron</b> 2%          |
| <b>Niacin</b> 20%   | <b>Vitamin E</b> 10%    |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.                  |                         |
| Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs. |                         |
|   | Calories 2000 2500      |
| Total Fat   | Less than 65g 80g       |
| Sat Fat   | Less than 20g 25g       |
| Cholesterol   | Less than 300mg 300mg   |
| Sodium  | Less than 2,400m 2400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate  | 300g 375g               |
| Dietary Fiber   | 25g 30g                 |

- 10 grams
- 13 grams
- 17 grams
- 20 grams