



## ***What is your portion size?***

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### ***SO WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL??***

#### ***The Problem***

According to the American Obesity Association, approximately 30.3 percent of children (ages 6 to 11) are overweight and 15.3 percent are obese. Excess weight in childhood and adolescence has been found to predict overweight in adults. Overweight children, aged 10 to 14, with at least one overweight or obese parent, were reported to have a 79 percent likelihood of overweight persisting into adulthood.

#### ***Health Consequences***

Children who are overweight or obese are at risk of developing chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, asthma, and sleep apnea. Many overweight young people experience psychosocial problems related to being overweight, including low self-esteem, loneliness, sadness, nervousness, and are more likely to smoke and drink alcohol.

#### ***The Causes***

Simply put, obesity is a problem of balance – consuming too much food and moving too little. While there are genetic factors at work in some cases, most obesity problems result from taking in more energy from food (calories) than is burned through exercise. Part of the problem is that we live in a society where big food is normal – biggie fries, super-sized sodas and quarter pound hamburgers. Portion sizes have steadily increased since the 1950's, and the amount of food Americans are eating has increased at the same time. A cola was 6.5 ounces and now 24 ounce cokes are not uncommon. A hamburger was 1.5 ounces, and now quarter pound hamburgers are the norm. As portion sizes grow, people tend to eat more.

#### ***What Can We Do?***

The adults in children's lives need to help them eat more nutritiously and exercise more. Building awareness about portion sizes offers a strategy that helps maintain a healthy weight. Teaching children to read food labels helps them make smart decisions about what and how much to eat. Teaching them to visualize a healthy portion is another helpful strategy. Within the Eat Small "tool kit", teachers will find a number of creative activities that can be used in a classroom to help children understand the importance of eating right-sized portions at meal and snack times. Don't let portion distortion "supersize" our kids!