



What is your portion size?

Choosing Sensible Portions

Take the following steps to help you smartsize your servings:

Do your homework

- Measure your food with measuring cups and spoons for one week.
- Keep a food diary for that week.
- Compare your typical portions (and calories) with MyPyramid recommendations.
- For hard-to-measure foods (snacks, French fries) count out the number of pieces in your portion.

Curb liquid calories

- Sodas are liquid sugar sources that don't fill us up.
- Switch to diet soda or order a small (kid-sized) regular soda.
- Switch to low-fat milk or juice for a beverage with vitamins and minerals.
- Switch to water or diluted 100% fruit juice.

Away from home

- Avoid upsizing meals at fast food restaurants.
- Eat only half the entrée: share, order a half portion or take home half.
- Don't order an entrée: have a salad and an appetizer as your meal.
- Go easy on the desserts. Take just five bites. Share or enjoy the next day.

At home

- Use smaller plates and bowls at home.
- Buy smaller packages of snack foods.
- "Batch cook" and divide prepared recipes into the number of servings specified BEFORE eating. Save leftovers or freeze.

Other helpful hints

- Make it satisfying. Truly enjoy your food; don't eat while doing something else. Eat slower.
- Be honest with yourself. If you eat a large portion size, eat less at the next meal.
- Always eat off a bowl or plate. Put smaller portions in a bowl or on a plate. Don't eat out of the carton or bag - it's too easy to keep going.
- Trust your body to tell you when you've had enough, but remember it takes about 20 minutes for your body to send you "full" signals.

Use what you have on hand

- A fist or cupped hand = 1 cup
- Your palm (no fingers) = 3 ounces of meat
- Your thumb = 1 ounce of cheese
- Your thumb tip = 1 teaspoon
- A handful = 1-2 ounces of snack food
- A tennis ball = 1 piece of fruit

Adapted from Portion Sizes and School-Age Children, NC SNAC 2003