

“PORTION CONTROL PITFALLS – KNOW YOUR PORTION SIZES!”

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Over the years, food portions have grown and become “supersized,” “value meal,” and served with a “large soft drink.” This is especially true in restaurants and even at home. Over half of Americans are overweight, and oversized portions of high calorie, high fat foods are contributors. Research has shown that we eat even more when faced with larger portion sizes.

KNOW YOUR PORTION SIZES

In order to help define the confusion about portion sizes, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has created specific guidelines for serving sizes. Below you’ll find some common guides for gauging portion sizes.

- Proteins (chicken, fish, pork, beef, etc.) – should be the size of your palm or a deck of cards.
- Fats (cheese, butter, etc.) – should be the size of two dice or the length of your thumb.
- Pasta – should be the size of a scoop of ice cream.
- Vegetables or fruit – should be the size of a baseball
- Snacks (pretzels, chips, etc.) – should be the size of a cupped handful.
- Bagels – should be the size of a hockey puck.

KNOW YOUR RECOMMENDED SERVINGS

Specific portion recommendations, also called servings, are published from associations like the American Dietetic Association, the USDA, the American Diabetes Association. Serving size recommendations are designed for portion control, disease prevention, weight maintenance, all stemming from proper nutrition. Daily recommendations are as follows for most healthy adults.

- Pasta/Grains - 6-11 servings
- Vegetables and Fruits – at least 3 – 5 servings
- Proteins – 2 -4 servings
- Dairy – 2 -3 servings
- Fats, oils and sweets – use sparingly

RESTAURANT REVENGE

When visiting restaurants, we are often served more food than one person needs at one meal. There are many strategies that you can use to combat being “over served.”

- Skip the appetizers, chips and bread – this can add over 1000 calories to your meal. For example eight mozzarella sticks have over 800 calories. A basket of tortilla chips can add about 400 calories to your meal.
- Split the entrée - When ordering, ask the server to split your entrée before it arrives to your table. You can either share an entrée with a friend, or have it placed in a “to-go box.”
- Do your research - Before going out, try to decide a healthy option on the menu and research any nutritional information before making your choices.
- Spoil your appetite – Many times we arrive at restaurants feeling ravenous. Research has shown that we eat less if we sip on a glass of milk, have some clear chicken broth, or eat a snack of fruits and vegetables before we go to a restaurant.
- If you arrive famished – order a garden salad with dressing on the side, or drink a glass of milk immediately to take away the hunger pangs and temptations to order unhealthy choices.

SAVVY EATING AT HOME

Eating at home can sometimes be tricky with regards to portion control. As a rule of thumb, fresh, non-processed, home prepared foods are usually a healthier option than eating out at a restaurant. However, there are some traps to avoid at home.

- Don't eat from the bag – if you choose to eat snacks such as chips, pretzels, cookies, etc., measure out the portion size and limit yourself to only one portion. Many times we zone out in front of the computer or TV and eat the whole bag!
- Eat a healthy snack – snacking on foods such as fruits, vegetables and lean proteins throughout the day can help us from being tempted to visit the vending machine, or “eat through the front door just to get to the kitchen.” Research has shown that skipping meals can lead us to overeating.
- Out of sight, out of mind – move unhealthy snacks to the back of the shelf, put them in a cabinet, replace the candy bowl with a fruit bowl. Be a good steward of healthy foods and proper portion control.
- Plan ahead – have a day to cut up vegetables and fruits. That will give you easy access to fresh, healthy foods throughout the week. Also, plan your menu for the week, then have the ingredients on hand at home. This will also help the temptation of running by a fast food restaurant on the way home from work.
- Designate your eating space – eating at a table, without clutter and distractions can help you stay mindful of your eating amount. Many times we eat in the car, in front of the TV or at the computer. This can lead to overeating because we miss our cues of feeling full.

Congratulations – you've made steps in the right direction for your own portion control!

RELATED RESOURCES

Be sure to visit www.cdc.gov, www.mypyramid.gov, or www.eatright.org for more information on portion control and healthy eating.