



# Portion Control

## PORTION DISTORTION

Research has shown that people consistently eat more food when portions are larger. Check out the table<sup>1</sup> below to see examples of how portions have changed over the years.

Food	20 years ago		Today	
	Portion	Calories	Portion	Calories
Bagel	3" diameter	140	6" diameter	350
Cheeseburger	1	333	1	590
Spaghetti with meatballs	1 cup sauce 3 small meatballs	500	2 cups sauce 3 large meatballs	1020
Soda	6.5 ounces	82	20 ounces	250
Blueberry muffins	1.5 ounces	210	5 ounces	500

Retrieved from:

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/distortion.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/eat-right/distortion.htm)

<http://>

## PORTION PROOF

**Macaroni and cheese.** A study tested to see how much food adults consumed on different days with four different portions of macaroni and cheese. Participants consumed 30% more when offered the largest portion (1000 grams) compared to the smallest portion (500 grams). They also reported similar ratings of hunger and fullness after each meal despite the intake differences. After the study, only 45% of the subjects reported noticing there were differences in the portion sizes.<sup>1</sup>

**Potato chips.** Researchers on five different occasions gave men and women an afternoon snack of potato chips packaged in bags that looked the same except they progressively increased in size — from 28g to 170g. Women ate 18% more from the 170 gram bag and men consumed 37% more from the 85 gram bag.<sup>2</sup>

**Soup.** People were served soup from normal bowls to determine their usual intake. During the study, researchers secretly substituted trick bowls that slowly refilled from a hidden reservoir under the table. All participants ate more than their usual portion. After being informed about the trick, normal-weight individuals adjusted their intake while obese individuals continued to overeat.<sup>3</sup>

## PORTION EQUIVALENTS

A serving size is listed on the Nutrition Facts panel of a food package and is a standardized measurement of the amount of food usually eaten at one time, whereas a portion size is the amount of food that you actually eat.

Portion Equivalents	
3 ounces of meat	Deck of cards
1 ounce of deli meat	CD/DVD
1 ounce of cheese	4 dice
1 teaspoon of peanut butter	Tip of thumb
½ cup of ice cream	Racquetball
1 medium apple or peach	Tennis ball

### References

1. Rolls BJ, Morris EL, & Roe LS. Portion size of food affects energy intake in normal-weight and overweight men and women. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2002;76:1207-1213.
2. Rolls BJ, Roe LS, Kral TVE, Meengs JS, Wall DE. Increasing the portion size of a packaged snack increases energy intake in men and women. *Appetite* 2004;42(1)63-69.
3. Pudel VE, Oetting M. Eating in the laboratory: behavioral aspects of the positive energy balance. *Int J Obesity* 1977;1:369-386.



# Portion Control

Many factors influence what and how much people eat—portions, variety, mood, convenience, packaging, marketing and more. Generally, people eat 92% of what is served so try setting yourself up for success with the following tips.

**Downsize dishes.** Use smaller bowls, plates, and cups for meals, snacks, desserts and drinks to give the illusion you have enough and limit how much you eat in one sitting.

**Pre-portion.** Use smaller bowls or plates, individual containers, or small plastic bags to pre-portion meals, snacks or treats. Buying individually, pre-portioned meals, snacks and treats is also a way to limit how much you eat in one sitting.

**Take what you need.** The amount of food we want to eat can be different than the amount of food our body needs. Start by taking smaller portions or less variety, and get more as needed or when you get hungry again.

**Skip seconds.** There's a difference between eating until you're full versus eating until you're no longer hungry. After eating a plate or bowl of food, consider whether it's stomach hunger, or whether you have more space to fill your stomach. Just because we have the capacity to eat more food doesn't mean our body needs more. If you still want more food after you've eaten, consider skipping seconds and finding alternative activities until you get hungry again.

**Out of sight, out of mind.** Typically, when people don't see food they don't think about it as much. That, or when food is less convenient, people are less likely to reach for it. For some people, this may mean storing food in a cabinet or pantry, asking a friend or family member to store food for you, going out to get food like treats in a small, pre-portioned amount, etc. You can also try limiting how much or how often you keep certain foods like treats in your space over a given period of time.

**Think before you drink.** It can be easy to drink a lot of unnecessary calories with certain beverages, especially since there are a lot of options to choose from (i.e. soda, lemonade, sweet tea, flavored coffee, fruit juice, milk, energy drinks, sports drinks, alcohol, etc.). Limit the amount you drink (i.e. 1-2 cups per day) or how often you have it (i.e. 24 fluid ounces per week). You can also alternate between a beverage with calories and one without (ex. water, tea, coffee, sparkling or fruit-flavored water, etc.).

**Order smaller portions.** Get a half-size, lunch-size, kid-size or small-size meal, order an appetizer, soup or salad, side dish, or something from the value menu.

**Share or split.** When dining out, share or split meals or desserts with someone (i.e. friend, family member, significant other), which can help save money and prevent you from overindulging in a meal with a larger portion.

**Make specific requests.** Ask for specific things, like having salad dressing on the side, cutting a sandwich in half and putting the rest in a to-go bag, whole grain bread instead of white, one "strip" of mayonnaise instead of the usual glob, or a "sprinkle" of cheese instead of a handful, etc. That, or request smaller portions to be served.

**To go container.** Many portions are nearly double or triple the amount a person needs in one sitting. Get a to-go container at the beginning of a meal and put half of your meal into it that you can save for eating later.

**Be ok with throwing it away.** If you aren't able to share extra food with others, keep leftovers for later, or will be too tempted to consume all of the food in one sitting, be ok with throwing it away. While it's admirable to not waste food, eating more than your body needs doesn't help you or someone else in need of food.