



Portion Distortion and Low Stress Meal Planning

Portion Distortion

We often hear about “watching your portion size”, but what exactly is a portion? That can be a bit tricky to figure out given the extreme portion distortion in today’s society. For example, a 3 inch bagel used to be a standard portion, but today bagels are often 6 inches or more with an additional 200 calories. Twenty years ago a portion of French fries was 2.5 oz. Today it is 7 oz. and 400 more calories. Pop was 6.5 oz. but now 20 oz. and 165 calories more. The American idea of how much should go on our plate or in our glass has drastically enlarged, and research shows people unconsciously eat more when given bigger portions.

The following table shows guidelines of how much of different foods count as one serving in each food group. This helps us determine how many *servings* may be in a *portion*.

FOOD GROUP	Fruit	Vegetables	Grains	Protein	Dairy
1 SERVING =	½ c. fresh, ¼ c. dried, ½ c. (4 oz.) juice	½ c. raw or cooked, ¼ c. (4 oz.) juice, 1 c. raw leafy greens	1 slice bread, 1 c. cereal, ½ c. cooked pasta, oatmeal or rice	1 oz. meat, ¼ c. beans, 1 egg, ½ oz. nuts, 1 T. peanut butter	1 c. milk, soymilk or yogurt, 1 ½ oz. cheese

Consuming recommended sized portions is an important change a person can make to reach and maintain a healthy weight. Measuring portions doesn’t have to involve scales, measuring cups and spoons. Comparing food to the size and shape of common household objects, as shown in the graphic, gives a good frame of reference. (Here is an additional helpful handout: [portion-control-guide.pdf \(webmd.com\)](http://www.webmd.com/portion-control-guide.pdf))

Along with the expansion of portions comes the expansion of the dishes we use. A helpful way to trick our minds into recognizing adequate portions is to use a smaller plate, bowl and glass.



Other tools to help keep portion sizes in perspective are MyPlate and the Nutrition Facts panel on food labels. MyPlate is a great visual based on a 9-inch plate. The plate is divided in half and then approximately half again so there are 4 sections. Half the plate should be filled with non-starchy vegetables and fruits, a little over another quarter with grains that include at least half whole grains, the last quarter with protein and then a side of dairy.

The Nutrition Facts panel can help us identify both portion size and ingredients in our foods. The top of the label lists serving size, number of servings, and calories per serving. The nutrients listed are based on the serving size. Pay close attention to the number of servings. Say you buy a muffin with 250 calories and 10 grams of fat per serving. The muffin is labeled as two servings. If you eat the whole muffin, you will have consumed 500 calories and 20 grams of fat.

Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
Serving size 1 1/2 cup (208g)	
Amount per serving	240
Calories	
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 4g	5%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	8%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 5mg	2%
Sodium 430mg	19%
Total Carbohydrate 46g	17%
Dietary Fiber 7g	25%
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 2g Added Sugars	4%
Protein 11g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 6mg	35%
Potassium 240mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Portion control is also important when it comes to some of the ingredients in the foods we eat. Most prepared foods and beverages contain large amounts of sodium, sugar, and/or fat. It is okay for these foods to be a part of our meals if we exercise portion control and moderation – eating them on occasion, not regularly. Concentrate on including most foods on your plate as fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruits (without added sugar) or 100% juice, low-fat or non-fat dairy products, whole grains, and low-fat cuts of meat. (Look for those with the terms loin and round). Choose no or low calorie beverages such as water, tea, skim or 1% milk.

Low Stress Meal Planning

A **Healthy Eating Pattern** does not mean dieting, but rather contributing to a healthy lifestyle. This includes great-tasting foods you love and developing a sensible, balanced eating plan; and committing to making behavior changes. Remember there is no such thing as a one-size fits all approach to weight management.

Meal Planning can help you reduce stress, as well as save time and money. Meals prepared at home are often healthier and taste better. Planning meals for several days in advance can also benefit your budget by reducing trips to the store, help stick to a shopping list and buy just what you need. Your menus should fit your food likes and dislikes, match your eating pattern and provide for your nutritional needs. Be sure to include your favorite recipes and match your time, energy and interest in cooking.

Plan for a Week or a Month: If you shop for groceries weekly, start with planning a week of your main meals. You can use a weekly or monthly planning tool, or makes notes on your calendar as you consider the daily activities of your household and/or work schedule along with your favorite meals. Couple examples: <https://app.box.com/s/cka7wbnpl6xyfraps71czg8ovi56kvjm> https://choosemyplate-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/audiences/grocery_gameplan_interactive.pdf

- **Vary Protein Foods** throughout the week/month. Meat is a great source of protein and nutrients; but is more expensive than other foods. Watch for sales and try some fish, pork or other meats for a variety of tastes and nutrition. Also consider dried beans, peas, lentils, eggs and nuts as protein sources.
- **Make Grocery List:** Check your refrigerator, freezer and cupboards for foods you need to use; then jot down items you need from the store.

- **Find Balance:** As you prepare/serve each meal, do your best to have foods from at least 3 food groups; and get all 5 food groups every day to get the nutrients your body needs. Have fresh vegetables/salad and fruit on hand to complete your meals. If you wash your vegetables when you get home from the store and cut them for snacking, you are more likely to grab them as an option when looking for a side or a snack.
- **Create Visual Appeal:** We eat with all our senses. Choose foods of contrasting colors, textures, flavors, sizes, shapes and temperatures to make meals more enjoyable! Half the plate should be vegetables and fruits – so choose some colorful ones!
- **Planned Overs:** Be efficient with your time and resources by cooking once and eating twice. I like to cook a couple main dishes and do a little baking on the weekend to make it easier to prepare quick meals during the week. Cook a roast or whole chicken and plan 2 or 3 meals. Properly store the portions for the meals in the refrigerator or freezer until ready to use. To keep your food budget in check, don't let half a roast be used as snack food.
- **Prep Food:** To save time during the week, take a few minutes on the weekend to wash and cut veggies for salad or veggies sticks. When dicing an onion, cut up the whole onion and store extra in a freezer bag/container in the freezer. Bake muffins or make a batch of breakfast burritos for the week.
- **Leftovers** are great to take for lunch. Make a casserole or soup with the leftovers. Plan a “Clean the Fridge” night and pull out all the containers with a serving of this or that. Let each person choose a dish to warm up. Then add a fresh salad, veggies and dip, or fresh fruit to round out the meal.



Meals Away from Home: Cooking and preparing meals at home allows more control over what and how much someone eats. Despite this, Americans eat about 24% of their meals away from home for social celebrations, for convenience, or due to a lack of cooking skills. Food prepared away from home is meant to look, smell, and taste great - meaning nutrition isn't necessarily the priority. Additionally, dishes are commonly served in large portion sizes. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to understand how to eat healthy away from the home.

Be Flexible: Life happens and we need to improvise. You can still have **Quick and Easy Meals:** Have food on hand for **30 Minutes Meals**, like Tacos/Taco Salad, Cheeseburger Macaroni Skillet, Tuna Casserole, or pancakes and eggs. Make meals easier by reducing the clean-up time. When you start your meal prep, run a sink of soapy dishwater to help you keep your dishes done as you go. You can enjoy your meal and have a 5 minute clean up following the meal.

Good health and weight management include a life-long commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Daily choices add up to a lifestyle. **Self-regulation** is choosing to eat a variety of foods, in appropriate portions because you are physically hungry. Incorporating at least **30 minutes of physical activity each day** can help individuals achieve or maintain good health.

Additional Resources:

Food Shopping and Meal Planning: <https://www.nutrition.gov/topics/shopping-cooking-and-meal-planning/food-shopping-and-meal-planning>

Quick and Healthy Meals: <https://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/nutrition-and-health/healthy-eating/tools-for-healthy-eating/quick-and-healthy-meals/>

Tools for Healthy Eating: <https://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/nutrition-and-health/healthy-eating/tools-for-healthy-eating/>



What is a Healthy Eating Pattern? <https://foodsmartcolorado.colostate.edu/nutrition-and-health/healthy-eating/tools-for-healthy-eating/1what-is-a-healthy-eating-pattern/>

Choose My Plate, USDA - <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

American Heart Association - <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/suggested-servings-from-each-food-group>

Portion Size Guide-

http://img.webmd.com/dtmcms/live/webmd/consumer_assets/site_images/media/pdf/diet/portion-control-guide.pdf



AHW Lesson Activities

Portion Distortion and Meal Planning

“Applying the Lesson”

Choose one of the following activities to apply what you learned about your health and your healthy goal setting. Write a short response (3 to 5 sentences) to describe what you did and learned from the activity selected. Report your Applying the Lesson results by Online form, email, fax or hard copy to your county Extension Office.

Option 1: Pick a meal and serve yourself the normal portions you typically would. Now stop and compare them to the recommended serving sizes for each food group. How do your portions compare? What changes could you make?

Option 2: Keep track of what you eat and drink for 3 days. For each food group, compare what you ate and your portion sizes to the recommendations. What did you learn about meeting the recommendations for each food group in relation to recommended servings and portion size?

Option 3: Digital Meal/Menu Planning Tools – If you want to do your menu planning using a phone app or an online tool, search for meal planning tools and share one or more you plan to use and why.

<https://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/best-meal-planning-apps/>

<https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/best-meal-planning-apps>

<https://www.rmhp.org/blog/2015/may/top-8-meal-planning-apps-for-a-healthy-diet>

Option 4: Eating away from home – if you eat away from home often, what tips have you used to maintain a healthy eating pattern and help you lose or maintain a healthy weight?