

# Serving Sizes

No matter how we say it, food servings are large and getting larger. Most people put too much on their plates and eat too much food. To be and stay at a healthy weight you need to eat healthy serving sizes. Controlling portion sizes is one of the best ways to obtain and keep a healthy weight. What is a serving size and how many servings do I need in a day? People who are the most successful at getting healthier and maintaining a healthy weight monitor what they eat. Initially, it is helpful to write things down. Once you are in the habit of writing down what you eat and how much you eat it won't take you long to become familiar with how much you individually need to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

Most people eat more than one healthy serving at a time. That's ok if you count the larger amount as 2 servings (or more). No matter what the food is, a calorie going in (being eaten) has to equal a calorie going out (being used) or one will not maintain a healthy weight.

So, what's the difference between a serving and a portion? A *serving size* is a measured amount set by the government. It is used to describe specific amounts of food that will be understood by everyone. Serving sizes are used in the Food Guide Pyramid and on packaged food labels. A *portion* is the amount of food you actually eat. Whether it is a large or small portion is up to you.

Some easy ways to picture serving sizes:

- |  |               |   |
|--|---------------|---|
| -1 cup of spaghetti/mashed potatoes/oatmeal                | looks like a: | -baseball   |
| -1 serving of meat (~3 ounces)<br>hand (without the thumb) |               | -deck of cards <i>or</i> the palm of your<br>hand |
| -1/2 cup of ice cream                                      |               | -light bulb                                       |
| -1 ounce of cheese   |               | -4 dice or size of adult thumb                    |
| -2 Tablespoons of peanut butter                            |               | -ping pong ball                                   |

*Bread/Rice/Pasta/Cereal:* 6 -11 servings/day (servings are smaller than you think!)

- 1 slice of bread
- 1/2 English muffin, bagel, or hamburger bun
- 1 corn or flour tortilla
- 1 cup cold cereal (serving size can vary...look at label!)
- 1/2 cup cooked cereal (oatmeal, cream of wheat or cream of rice)
- 1/2 cup cooked pasta or rice

*Milk/Yogurt/Cheese:* 2-3 servings/day. Choose nonfat or 1%.

- 1 cup milk or yogurt
- 1/2 cup frozen yogurt
- 1 oz. of cheese (4 dice)
- 1 slice of American cheese
- 1 stick of string cheese

*Meat/Fish/Poultry/Beans/Eggs/Nuts*

- 3 oz. cooked lean meat, poultry or fish (deck of cards)
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter (ping pong ball)
- 1 slice lunch meat
- 1 egg

- 1/2 cup cooked beans
- 1/3 cup nuts

### *Fats/Oils/Sweets*

- 1 teaspoon butter/margarine (tip for your thumb)
- 2 teaspoons of salad dressing
- 2 Tablespoons of low-fat salad dressing
- 1 Tablespoon of cooking oil
- 1 Tablespoon of cream cheese
- 2 Tablespoons of low-fat cream cheese
- 2 inch square of cake

### *Fruits and Vegetables*

UNLIMITED!!!

### *Combination Foods*

- 1 slice of pizza (1/4 of a 10-inch pizza): 2 servings of bread plus 1 serving of cheese and 2 servings of fat
- 1 cup of macaroni and cheese: 2 servings of pasta plus one serving of cheese and 2 servings of fat (like pizza)
- 1 cup of casserole: 2 servings of pasta plus 1-2 servings of meat and 2 servings of fat

Average serving sizes in real life:

- |                          |                     |                                  |
|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Short stack of pancakes: | 4-5 servings        | 1 serving of pancake = 4-inch CD |
| Quarter-pound burger:    | 1- 2 servings       |                                  |
| Big scoop of ice cream:  | 1 - 2 servings      |                                  |
| Quesadilla:              | 2 - 3 servings      |                                  |
| Large bagel:             | 4 - 6 servings (!!) |                                  |

Get smart about portions! Know how much you eat and make a portion plan!!

At home: -Choose healthier foods and smaller portions. Take lunch to school at least 2-3 days a week.

-Eat snacks from bowl. You'll eat less if you measure your serving. Don't eat right out of the bag, box, or carton.

-Keep a big bowl of fruit on the kitchen counter in sight.

Eating out: -Try adding a salad with low-fat dressing to the regular meal instead of super-sizing.

-Take some home. Eat half of that huge plate of spaghetti or giant burrito and the rest home with you.

-Share meals with a friend or family member. Split a burger and get your own salads. Share the fries. Order one dessert.

-Try new foods. A grilled chicken sandwich with lettuce and tomatoes has fewer calories and fat than a cheeseburger for the same portion size.

-Find new places to eat. Look for restaurants that offer a good deal without upsizing. Ask about healthy choices such as salads and baked potatoes.

Remember small changes, especially in portion sizes, add up to big, lifetime changes when maintained over a lifetime.