

SCALE BACK ON PORTION SIZES

A key part of healthy eating means choosing the appropriate amounts of different foods. When it comes to deciding how much to eat, the terms serving size and portion size are often interchangeable.

Serving size is a standardized amount of food. It may be used to quantify recommended amounts, as is the case with the MyPlate food groups. It may also represent quantities that people typically consume based on a Nutrition Facts Label.

Portion size is the amount of a food you choose to eat – which may be more than or less than a serving. For example, the Nutrition Facts Label may indicate $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cereal per serving. However, if you eat $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, that is your portion size.

Estimating Portion Sizes

Measuring cups and spoons are great tools to see if your portion is the same as the serving size. However, these tools aren't always available when you're getting ready to eat. Another way to estimate your portion size is by comparing it to your hand or certain objects.

A baseball or an average-sized fist = 1 cup (1 C)

- 1 C of cold cereal, 1 C of rice or pasta
- 8 oz of milk or yogurt
- 8 oz of serving of natural fruit juices

A tennis ball or small, scooped handful = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 1 ounce (1oz)

- 1 oz of nuts
- 1 oz of dried fruits
- $\frac{1}{2}$ c of fruit or vegetables

INCLUSION MATTERS: Use the MyPlate as a guide for healthy portions. Imagine a plate is in front of you. Divide it into quarters. Half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate should be whole grains, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate should be for protein. American's have grown used to the protein or the meat being the star of the dish, but we only need 3-4 ounces each meal. That is about the size of the palm of your hand or a deck of cards. Fruits and vegetables should be about the size of your whole hand. Your hand is a good guide to use for healthy portions. [Reading the nutrition label](#) on packaged foods to determine appropriate portion sizes can

A deck of cards or the palm of the hand = 3 ounces

- 3 oz of fish, chicken, beef, and other meats

The size of the thumb = 1 tablespoon (1T)

- 1 T of peanut butter or other nut spreads such as almond butter
- 1 oz of low-fat cheese

A postage stamp or the distance from the tip of your pointer finger to the first joint = 1 teaspoon (1 tsp.)

- 1 tsp. of oils or other fats

Before you eat, think about what and how much food goes on your plate, in your cup, or bowl. Is it an actual serving size? It is easy to mistake a larger portion for a serving size and on some days it's fine to eat more than a serving! But knowing the difference will help you overcome portion distortion more often and downsize your portions when needed. Try the following tips to help:

- **Read the label** – The Nutrition Facts label can help you to identify the appropriate serving size.
- **Eat from a plate, not a package** – It is easy to eat more than one serving when eating straight from the box or bag.
- **Use the right measuring tools** – Try portioning out foods with measuring cups and spoons to give yourself an idea of what the serving size should look like.
- **Skip the upgrade** – When dining out, it may seem like a better value to pay 50 cents extra for a larger size. However, you are paying for extra-unwanted calories, fats, sugar, salt, etc.

also be helpful. If you need assistance reading a label, utilize a store employee, friend, or caregiver. There are smartphone apps available that read aloud the nutrition information; this may especially benefit someone with vision loss or reading difficulty.

Make every bite count and learn more about serving sizes and how much food from each food group you need on the [USDA's MyPlate website](#). Envision the MyPlate as a guide each time you eat, even at restaurants. And last but not least, at home, make your kitchen [accessible](#) for you!

FAMILY MATTERS: Are there days that your child is more active than others? Their young bodies are still growing and on those days, they may need a little more support to meet nutrition recommendations and feed their appetite. Sometimes they may require more than a serving size and it is ok to have portions that satisfy them. When that happens, encourage larger portions of healthier foods like fruits, vegetables, and lean protein as much as possible rather than things like chips or candy. When kids are hungry for more, use the opportunity to fuel their bodies with nutritious foods.

LINKS:

Avoid portion size pitfalls: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/portion_size.html

Serving size vs. Portion size: <https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/nutrition-facts-and-food-labels/serving-size-vs-portion-size-is-there-a-difference>