

Portion Distortion



You probably know that portion sizes are getting bigger and bigger. The term Portion Distortion is often used to describe the discrepancy between the amount of food we should be eating and what we are *actually* eating.

As food portions have grown larger, so has our weight and waistlines.

Children are not immune from the effects of portion distortion. Many children eat far too much for their age resulting in childhood overweight and obesity rates that are reaching epidemic proportions. This is creating a generation of adolescents and young adults that do not know how much to eat or how to eat healthfully. So what can be done about this problem? One of the more effective solutions is to learn to portion control. Continue

reading below to learn more about [portion sizes](#), [portion sizes of school meals](#), [tools to help you measure out correct portion sizes](#), and [tips to help you control portions while at home and dining out](#).



Portion Size



We have become accustomed to eating more food. The portion sizes served at restaurants are sometimes two or three times more than what we need. Fast food restaurants are not the only establishments serving large portions. Think about the portion sizes of the meals at Mexican or Italian restaurants. The food is often served on large platters or bowls. This increase in portion sizes can also be found in our homes. We have lost our ability to judge how much food is enough. Studies have been conducted which show that people who are given more food tend to consume more than those who are given less. So basically, the more food that is placed in front of us, the more calories we consume. This is only one part of the obesity problem, but it is a big part.

If we were to be served the correct portion sizes, we would probably look at the serving and think, "There's no way that's going to be enough!" The truth is our bodies were not meant to have to carry around a lot of excess weight. Although the correct portion sizes may look miniscule compared with what you're used to eating, it will sustain you. The difficult part of this is learning what correct portion sizes are and being able to determine when you are no longer hungry.



School Breakfast and Lunch

Unlike restaurant meals, school meals are required to meet certain nutrient standards. School breakfasts provide $\frac{1}{4}$ of the RDA (Recommended Dietary Allowance) for calories, protein, calcium, iron, vitamin A, and vitamin C. School lunches are required to provide $\frac{1}{3}$ of the RDA for those nutrients. Part of meeting these nutrient requirements is ensuring that the portion sizes being served are correct. When food is over- or under-portioned, the students are either being over or under fed. To teach healthy eating and portion control, students are offered fruits and vegetables in age-appropriate portions in addition to their pre-portioned entree. Students rarely complain that they are not served enough food.

If you're having trouble figuring out how much to serve or what to serve, use the variety and portion control methods found in the school cafeterias.

This means providing meals that include milk, fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and meat and using portioning tools like scales and scoops. If you don't have these tools, keep reading below to learn some easy ways to estimate proper portion sizes.

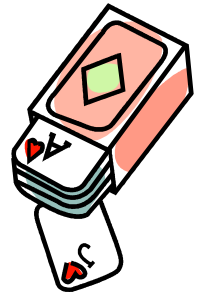




Handy Portioning Tools

You can use the following tools to help you portion out your food.

- 1 serving of raw fruit = size of a baseball
- 1 serving of spaghetti, pasta, or rice = size of ½ a baseball
- 1 serving of cereal = size of a baseball
- 1 serving of meat (3 oz.) = size of a deck of cards
- 1 pancake or bread serving = size of a CD
- Small baked potato = size of a computer mouse
- 1 serving of cheese = 4 dice
- 2 Tablespoons of peanut butter = size of a golf ball



If you don't have those tools available, here are some more ways to estimate portions:



- 1 cup of fruit or veggies = size of a woman's fist
- 1 ounce of cheese = size of your thumb
- 1 teaspoon of peanut butter = tip of your thumb
- 1 ounce of nuts or small candy = one handful
- 1 cup milk, yogurt, or fresh greens = size of a small hand holding a tennis ball
- ½ cup of fruit, veggies, or pasta = size of a small fist
- 3 ounces of meat, fish, or poultry = size of a woman's palm



Portion Control Tips



Restaurants

1. Split a meal with a friend
2. Ask for a To-Go box when your meal is served and immediately put $\frac{1}{2}$ of the food into the box
3. Avoid all-you-can-eat buffets
4. When ordering a salad, ask for the dressing on the side. You can control how much dressing goes on your salad.
5. Stop eating once you no longer feel hungry. You should not eat until you are stuffed.

At Home

1. Do not put all of the food on the table. Portion it in the kitchen and then bring it to the table.
2. When snacking, do not take the whole package or container of food with you. Portion out what you want and leave the rest in the kitchen.
3. Eat fruit before eating meals. This may help you to eat less by curbing your hunger.
4. Use smaller plates. The smaller the plate, the less food that it can hold even though it may look full.

