

A Healthier You

Measuring Up What You Eat



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.



Eating healthy calls for more than just choosing a wide variety of foods. It also calls for looking at **how much** and **how often** you eat. Being aware of serving sizes can help you eat what's right for you.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) **Nutrition Facts** information is printed on most packaged foods. It tells you how many calories and how much fat, carbohydrate, sodium, and other nutrients are available in one serving of food. Most packaged foods contain more than a single serving. The serving sizes that appear on food labels are based on FDA-established lists of foods. (For more information, see www.cfsan.fda.gov.)



What's the difference between a portion and a serving?

A "portion" is how much food you choose to eat at one time, whether in a restaurant, from a package, or in your own kitchen. A "serving" size is the amount of food listed on a product's Nutrition Facts. Sometimes, the portion size and serving size match; sometimes they do not. Keep in mind that the serving size on the Nutrition Facts label is not a recommended amount of food to eat. It is a quick way of letting you know the calories and nutrients in a certain amount of food.

How can I control portions?

You do not need to measure and count everything you eat for the rest of your life—just do this long enough to recognize typical serving sizes. Try these ideas to help you control portions throughout your day.

Take the amount of food that is equal to one serving, according to the Nutrition Facts, and eat it off a plate instead of eating straight out of a large box or bag.

Avoid eating in front of the TV or while busy with other activities. Pay attention to what you are eating, chew your food well, and fully enjoy the smell and taste of your foods.

Eat slowly so your brain can get the message that your stomach is full.



Try using smaller dishes, bowls and glasses. This way, when you fill up your plate or glass, you will be eating and drinking less.

To control your intake of the higher-fat, higher-calorie parts of a meal, take seconds of vegetables and salads (watch the toppings) instead of desserts and dishes with heavy sauces.



When cooking in large batches, freeze food that you will not serve right away. This way, you will not be tempted to finish eating the whole batch before the food goes bad. And you will have ready-made food for another day. Freeze leftovers in amounts that you can use for a single serving or for your family at a future meal.

Try to eat meals at regular intervals. Skipping meals or leaving large gaps of time between meals may lead you to eat larger amounts of food the next time that you eat.



When buying snacks, go for single-serving prepackaged items and foods that are lower-calorie options. If you buy larger bags or boxes of snacks, divide the items into single-serve packages.

Make snacks count. Eating many high-calorie snacks throughout the day may lead to weight gain. Replace snacks like chips and soda with snacks such as low-fat or fat-free yogurt, smoothies, fruit, or whole-grain crackers.

When you do have a treat like chips or ice cream, measure out 1/2 cup of ice cream or 1 ounce of chips, as indicated by the Nutrition Facts, eat it slowly, and enjoy it!



Drink plenty of water. Make water more appealing by keeping it cold in the fridge or adding a slice of fruit for flavor. Choosing water keeps you from drinking something else that may be loaded with calories and sugar. People who drink sugar- or artificially-sweetened beverages tend to consume more calories.

Eating out can be enjoyable, but it may be difficult to control the amount of food you are served. Try these tips to eat reasonably when away from home:

Share your meal, order a half-portion, or order an appetizer as a main meal. Examples of healthier appetizers include tuna or chicken salad, minestrone soup, and tomato or corn salsas.



Take at least half of your meal home. Ask for a portion of your meal to be boxed up when it is served so you will not be tempted to eat more than you need.

Avoid large beverages such as “supersize” sugar-sweetened soft drinks. They have a large number of calories. Instead, try drinking water with a slice of lemon. If you want to drink soda, choose a calorie-free beverage or a small sugar-sweetened soft drink.

Stop eating when you begin to feel full. Focus on enjoying the setting and your friends or family for the rest of the meal. With a little practice, healthy eating will become an easy way of life!

(Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) and [US FDA](https://www.fda.gov))