

## Portion control — Downsize portions for better weight control

By Mayo Clinic staff

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### Nutrition-wise blog

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## Portion control — Downsize portions for better weight control

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Research tells us that people eat more when presented with larger portions of food. Even children as young as two years are affected by portion size. Our judgment about serving sizes has been completely skewed by restaurant portions, food packaging and our own eyes. So how do we reset our expectations about appropriate portions? You're already on track by reading this. Now, how do you apply it to yourself?

Start by familiarizing yourself with appropriate serving sizes. If you don't have a food scale or measuring cups handy, use visual cues to help you judge portion sizes:

- A serving of fish (3 ounces) is the size of a deck of cards
- A serving of pasta or dry cereal (1/2 cup) is the size of a hockey puck
- A serving of fresh fruit (1/2 cup) is the size of a tennis ball
- A serving of butter (1 teaspoon) is the size of one die

Test yourself — pour yourself a bowl of cereal and then transfer it to a measuring cup. How much is your portion? How does it compare with the recommended serving size?

Here are other tips to try:

- **Don't put dinner on the table.** Instead, serve it from the stovetop or countertop. You'll think twice before you get up for seconds.
- **Don't eat out of the box.** Put your snack in a small bowl or other container. And then put the box or package away.

- **Opt for single-serving treats.** The fear of a wrapper trail will keep you honest.
- **Downsize your meal.** Restaurant portions are notoriously large. So when eating out, plan to eat only half of the meal. You can share the rest with a friend or ask for a doggie bag. Alternately, consider asking for a "light" or "lunch-size" portion.
- **Try the tasting menu.** At parties, sample two or three bites of the dishes on offer. Keep the portions small and have fun enjoying the variety.
- **Take time to enjoy yourself.** Appreciate the colors, smells and textures of your food. Stop and talk to your family and friends between bites. By slowing down you'll be better able to appreciate your meal and to register when you're full.

How do you do with minding your portions? Share your tips.

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#### References

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