Aim for a Healthy Weight

Keep an Eye on Portion Size

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

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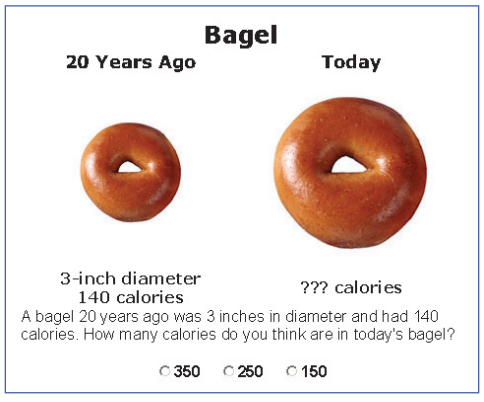
What is the difference between a *portion* and a *serving size*?

Portion

A portion is the amount of food that you choose to eat for a meal or snack. It can be big or small—you decide.

Serving

A "serving" is a measured amount of food or drink, such as one slice of bread or 1 cup of milk. Some foods that most people consume in one portion actually contain multiple servings (e.g., a 20-ounce soda or 3-ounce bag of chips).



Anyone eating on the run or at restaurants has probably noticed that food portions have gotten larger. Some portions are called "super sized," while others have simply grown in size and provide enough food for at least two people. With this growth have come increases in waistlines and body weight.

Above is an example of how today's portions compare to the portions available 20 years ago. Additional examples of portion distortion can be found at **http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion**.

[Answer: 350 calories]

Nutrition recommendations use standard serving sizes so people can know how much of different types of foods they should eat to get the nutrients they need. Although you can't always control the food portions served to you in restaurants and other places, you can control how much of the portion you eat. The amount you eat or drink plays an important role in whether you maintain a healthy weight. You may be eating more than you realize.

Knowing your daily calorie goal to maintain a healthy weight helps you choose the right number of servings from each food group. Your portions need not match the standard serving sizes—they can be larger or smaller. But, to stay within your energy needs, the total amount you eat during the day should match the total amount recommended for each group. Some common food portions can equal the amount that is recommended for the whole day. For example, one bagel may weigh up to 5 ounces, which equals the entire day's allotment of grains for someone on a 1,600 calorie plan.

Check the photos below for examples of commonly eaten foods. Visit **http://mypyramid.gov** to learn more about the amounts of food you need to eat from each food group to meet your calorie goals.

Grains

Brown rice
½ cup
(1-ounce equivalent of whole grains)

Whole-wheat cereal flakes
1 cup
(1-ounce equivalent of whole grains)

Whole-wheat bread
1 slice
(1-ounce equivalent of whole grains)

Vegetables

Raw baby spinach
1 cup
(counts as ½ cup dark green vegetables)

Baked sweet potato
1 large
(counts as 1 cup orange vegetables)

Raw tomato
½ cup
(counts as ½ cup other vegetables)

For More Information

- MyPyramid (U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)): http://mypyramid.gov
- Aim for a Healthy Weight: http://healthyweight.nhlbi.nih.gov
- Portion Distortion: http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/
- ***We Can!***™ (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition): http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov

To Learn More

Contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) for information and publications on healthy eating.

NHLBI Health Information Center
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Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
Phone: 301–592–8573
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Web site: http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's MyPyramid, online at http://mypyramid.gov.

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Fruits

Gala apple
1 small
(counts as 1 cup fruit)

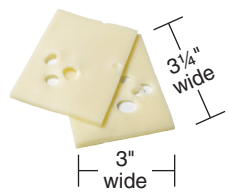
Orange juice
½ cup
(counts as ½ cup fruit)

Strawberries
½ cup
(counts as ½ cup fruit)

Milk and Milk Products

Yogurt
8 fluid ounce carton
(counts as 1 cup milk)

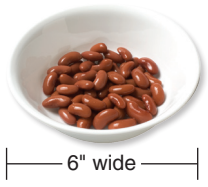
Milk
8 fluid ounces
(counts as 1 cup milk)



Swiss cheese
2 slices, ¾ ounce each
(counts as 1 cup milk)

Meats and Beans

Chicken breast
1 small breast half, cooked
(3-ounce equivalent of meat and beans)



Cooked kidney beans
½ cup
(2-ounce equivalent of meat and beans)

Cashews
1 ounce, about 13 cashews
(2-ounce equivalent of meat and beans + 2 tsp oil)

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