Aim for a Healthy Weight

Keep an Eye on Portion Size

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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).

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)
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)

For More Information

- Aim for a Healthy Weight: http://healthyweight.nhlbi.nih.gov
- 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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