



## Take Control of Portion Sizes

It can be really tricky to know how much the right amount that you and your family should eat. Here are some tips to make it easier for you:

What is the difference between a portion and a serving?

A "portion" is how much food you choose to eat, whether in a restaurant, from a package, or in your own kitchen. It's the amount you put on your plate. A "serving" is an amount of a food, such as a cup or an ounce, used in providing dietary guidance (recommendations) or making comparisons among similar foods (such as on the food label). Servings and portions are not always the same.

The key to helping kids stay healthier is eating sensible portion sizes. Larger portions mean more calories, and those extra calories are tough for kids to burn off. The tips below will help you understand more about the amount of food your kids are eating and what a portion size really is:

**When a label refers to "one serving," it really means:**

- 1 slice of bread (so a sandwich has two servings of bread)
- ½ cup cooked rice or pasta
- 1 pancake (about the size of a CD)
- 1 small piece of fruit (about the size of your fist)
- ½ cup fruit juice (most small bottles of juice have more than this so make sure to read the label)
- 1 cup of milk or yogurt
- 1 tsp of margarine (about the size of half your thumb)
- ½ cup of ice cream (about the size of a baseball)
- 2 oz. cheese (about the size of a small matchbox)
- 2-3 oz. meat, chicken or fish (about the size of a deck of cards)

Check out our PDF on reading food labels in the For Parents section.

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### How can I control portions at home?

- **Shrink the plates:** Having a smaller plate may make it look as though there's more food on it. It's a way to "trick" your brain into thinking you are getting more.
- **Dish it out:** You'll tend to eat more if you eat directly out of a container or box. Put a handful of crackers on a plate instead of reaching into the box, and put ice cream in a bowl instead of eating it out of the carton.
- **Drink water before eating:** If you drink a big glass of water before you sit down to eat, you'll feel fuller and won't be tempted to eat as much.
- **Wait more than a second for seconds:** Eat a moderate first serving of food. Then, wait a few minutes before going back for seconds. It takes twenty minutes for your stomach to tell your brain that it's full, so after waiting you might find that you're no longer hungry enough for that second helping.
- **Keep it simple:** Prepare foods that have easy-to-see portions. You can also buy foods in individual portions (make sure you check on the label) to take out some of the guesswork.

### How can I control portions when eating out?

- **Know what you're getting:** Restaurant portions have been steadily growing in recent years. Customers want to get a good value for their money, so restaurants serve them more than enough food. Take a good look at when you're served and compare that to what you know to be a reasonable portion. For example, many restaurants give several servings of pasta as one "portion."
- **Save a half:** When you get your meal, visually cut the plate down the middle. Eat one half, and then ask for the rest to go. You'll control your portion and have a ready-to-go lunch for the next day.
- **Skip the bread:** Take a piece of bread, then ask the waiter to take the bread basket away so you're not tempted to keep snacking before your meal arrives.
- **Get dressing on the side:** Ask for sauces and dressings on the side. If you can pour it on to your food yourself, you'll probably use less than if the restaurant does it for you.

Check out our PDF on making better choices in fast food restaurants in the For Parents section.