



Good for You!

Smaller Plate, Lower Weight?

Most of us struggle to control our weight. Still, obesity continues to be a major public health concern for adults and children. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) notes that for more than 25 years, over half of the adult population has been overweight and obese. While many factors affect weight gain, the basic cause comes down to math – more calories taken in, through food and beverages, than calories being burned by our bodies.



It's not just that we eat more than we burn through physical activity. Instead, it has a lot to do with the size of what we choose to eat and drink. "Portion size" refers to the amount of food appropriate for a person to eat or drink, depending on their daily calorie and nutrient

needs. Portions of most commonly eaten foods in the U.S. have increased steadily since the 1970s, and parallel our nation's rising obesity rates.

Research shows that we typically are not aware we are eating more. One study found that men and women (both overweight and normal weight) ate 30% more food and calories when they were served a large portion versus a regular-sized portion. We serve ourselves bigger portions (and eat more of what we take!) when we use bigger dishes, spoons or glasses.

Eating less is one key to weight-control success. Try these simple steps to control portions.

What about those foods that don't even make it to our plate? Snack foods and packaged products confuse consumers, because we are likely to eat an entire package, bag, bottle or can – even if it contains multiple servings!

Simple step #1 – Split it! Share with a friend, or save some for later. You'll save money as well as calories, and if you save part of your portion, keep it out of your sight. You will be less likely to "finish it off" before you are hungry again.



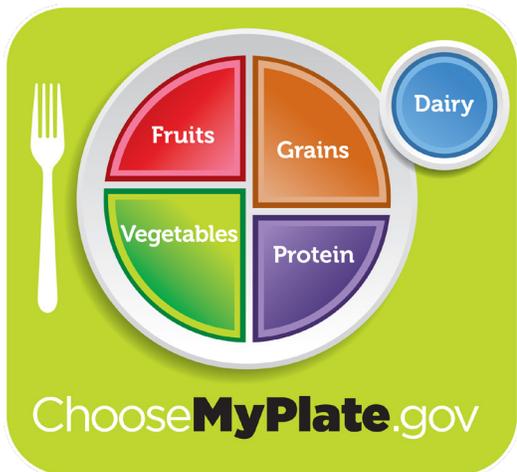
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More Simple Steps to Control Portions

Simple step #2 – Choose small, once and for all. If splitting a meal can't work for you this time, here's another tip. Order your meal from the appetizer list or the children's menu – ask your server to see what is possible. A child's portion is typically smaller and provides fewer calories, with no leftovers.

Do you buy big to save money? Here's **Simple step #3 – Portion bulk buys** into your own smaller servings when you get home from the store – don't count on "calorie willpower" to kick in later when you are hungry and in a hurry. For most of us, that simply won't happen – so now is the time! Divide snack foods into single-serve containers, portion nuts or crackers into 100-calorie servings (read the Nutrition Facts label closely to learn how much to pack!) Are you worried you will feel hungry if you cut portion sizes?



Simple step #4 – MyPlate is my plan! Think about the strategy of MyPlate –fill half your plate with nutrient-packed, low calorie fruits and vegetables. Their fiber content will help you feel full longer so you eat fewer calories.

Multi-tasking takes a toll on our weight. **Simple step #5 – Eat mindfully** is an important reminder to take time to focus on eating. Try to avoid tasks that distract you during meals and snacks – when we divide our attention, we mindlessly finish what's in front of us, often without realizing how much we're eating. Extra calories go in

without our taking the opportunity to really think about what, and how much, we are eating and how hungry or satisfied we might be. Taking time to simply eat may seem a real challenge, but it can be an effective weight loss technique.

We mentioned it earlier, but we'll close with a proven winner. **Simple step #6 – Choose a smaller plate to help lose weight!** It sounds too simple to work, but research shows it is effective. By using a smaller plate, bowl, cup or glass, we eat or drink less than we would if our dishes were larger, and save calories as a result. Try this step at your next picnic or cookout, holiday meal or party. You and your guests can go back for more if desired, but studies show we typically stop with one serving – even if it is smaller than usual!

Over time, practicing these simple steps can form healthy habits, and tip the scales toward a healthy weight.

Source: Young LR. Moving toward mindful portions in America: A review of portion guidance literature, legislation and opportunities to improve public health. 2017. Nestle' USA.

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This material is funded by USDA SNAP. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider. SNAP provides food assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. For information, call 1-888-369-4777.

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