

By Candice Graham

# PORTION DISTORTION

## IT'S NO SECRET THAT AMERICANS HAVE A DISTORTED PERCEPTION OF PORTION SIZE.

If you want to shock European visitors, just order them entrées at one of our most popular restaurant franchises. We laugh, but the sad thing about portion distortion is that it has increased steadily over the years. Today, it's considered by most to be the No. 1 factor contributing to our nation's obesity epidemic. Understanding healthy portion and serving sizes is a great first step toward healthy eating habits. Let's clear up the confusion. ➔

### What is a portion size?

Portion size is *not* the same as serving size. This is a big misconception among most Americans. A portion is the amount of food you eat at one time. A serving is the amount of food listed on a product's Nutrition Facts label. All the nutritional values you see on a label are for the suggested serving size, not the whole bag. So what's a proper serving size for the foods you most commonly eat?

See the guidelines below.

### The American Heart Association breaks it down like this:

- Meat, poultry, or fish:** 2-3 oz. (about the size of a deck of cards)
- Milk or yogurt:** 1 cup (about the size of a baseball)
- Bread:** 1 slice (about the size of a cassette tape)
- Fruit:** 1 small piece or half a cup of fruits like blueberries and grapes (about the size of a light bulb)
- Rice or pasta:** half a cup (about the size of a light bulb)

### Additionally, the Mayo Clinic recommends these serving sizes for other common foods:

- Vegetables:** a cup to half a cup, depending on the vegetable (about the size of a light bulb to about the size of baseball)
- Mayonnaise:** two teaspoons (about the size of two dice)
- Cheese:** 2 oz. (about the size of three or four dice)

Portion control is important, and using these visual cues to remind yourself of appropriate serving sizes can help you determine just how much to pile on your plate.



## Helping Kids WITH Portion Control

It's important for adults to keep portions under control, but it's equally important to teach kids at a young age to practice healthy portion and serving sizes. Things kids learn when they're young, like healthy eating habits, are likely to stick with them throughout their adult lives as well. But how do you help your kids eat healthier, smarter serving sizes?

There are lots of ways! Here are a few:

- 1 Serve food on small plates, so there's no empty space.
- 2 Avoid giving kids an entire bag or container of food. Instead, serve individual portions.
- 3 Encourage kids to color their plate with bright foods like squash and tomatoes. Colorful foods tend to be healthier.
- 4 Aim for three healthy meals and two snacks per day. Strategically choose snack time so kids will be hungry at mealtimes.
- 5 Explain the concept of the "divided plate" to your kids – use one top section of the plate for protein and the other for a starch, then fill the bottom half with veggies or fruit.
- 6 Incorporate salads or fruit before the main course to give a sense of fullness.
- 7 Order kids' meals at restaurants or have appetizers as a main dish – restaurant portions may be up to triple the recommended serving size.