

Right-Size Your Portions

Q: What in the world does a hamburger have to do with a yo-yo?

A: When a hamburger is a healthy portion size, it's about the same size as a yo-yo!

Today's oversized portions often lead to overeating. Keep that from happening in your family with these simple tips for recognizing and enjoying healthy serving sizes. Then, share the illustrated guide on the back with your youngster for a fun reminder of what healthy portions look like.

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Recognize a serving

Play the "How big is a serving?" game. Set out measuring cups and spoons, and choose an item from your refrigerator or pantry (say, a tub of cream cheese or a box of crackers). Each person measures or counts out what he thinks is one serving. Together, check the label. Whoever came closest picks another food to play again. Over time, your child will learn to "eyeball" the appropriate amount.



Downsize plates

Did you know that dinner plates are actually 3"-4" larger than they were a generation ago? Try instantly reducing portions by bringing plates back down to size. For instance, serve dinner on salad plates. Or use cups instead of bowls.

Cook—and serve—smart

Cut back on how much food everyone eats before the meal even begins. You might bake macaroni and cheese in individual ramekins, one per person. Or plate food before bringing it to the table. Your youngster will get used to enjoying reasonably sized meals.

Portion out leftovers

Store leftovers in sectioned plates or containers. Your child can place individual servings of entrees and side dishes in separate sections. When she's ready to heat up a meal, her portions will be just right.

Single-size your snacks

Eating from a bag or box makes it hard for your youngster to know how many servings he consumes. Instead, help him count or measure single servings into snack-size bags. *Examples:* 20 mini pretzels, 1 cup popcorn.



Dining out

Restaurants often serve extra-large portions. Try these strategies to help your family trim them to a healthy size.

Go small

At fast-food or fast-casual places, encourage your youngster to avoid "super-size" items. In a sit-down restaurant, suggest that she order an appetizer or two side dishes for her meal.

Share food

Rather than ordering a full-sized meal for each person, get one meal for every two people. Then, add side salads or extra servings of healthy vegetables.

Bring home a doggie bag

Doggie bags aren't just for dogs! Ask the server to bring a to-go box with your meal. Let your child help you scoop half the food in the box before you even put a fork in it. You'll not only avoid overeating, you'll have dinner tonight and lunch tomorrow—for the price of one meal.



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Here's a fun way to serve up healthy portion sizes: Have your youngster use familiar items to visualize how big her servings should be. Post this chart as a handy reference for comparisons between some favorite foods and everyday objects.

Fruits

1 cup grapes: a baseball



1 cup strawberries: a doorknob



1 cup diced watermelon: a lightbulb



Vegetables

1 cup raw, leafy greens like lettuce or spinach: rolled-up ankle socks



1 cup baby carrots: a tennis ball



1 cup peas: a child's closed fist



Grains

1 cup dry cereal: a medium pinecone



1 bagel or hamburger bun: a hockey puck



1/2 cup cooked pasta or rice: 2 ice-cream scoops



Protein

1/2 cup cooked beans: a computer mouse



3-oz. serving of meat, chicken, or turkey: a yo-yo



2 tbsp. peanut butter or other nut butter: a golf ball



Dairy

1 oz. cheese: 4 dice



1 tsp. butter: a Scrabble tile



1 cup yogurt: a cupcake wrapper



Editor's Note: Nutrition Nuggets™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.

Nutrition Nuggets™

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