

Portion Distortion: What is a normal serving size?

One of the biggest challenges to weight management is related to food portion size.

Portion size has grown so much in recent decades, it's hard to even imagine what a normal serving looks like. In many popular restaurants and fast-food chains, the cost difference between the regular size options and the supersize options often creates a perception that the "value is better when you go big." The downside is that this can cause you to consume more calories than the daily amount needed, resulting in excessive weight gain. This may lead to prediabetes and/or diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and other serious health problems.

Become a "portion pro"

If you know what a healthy portion size should be, you will be able to make smarter choices whenever you're preparing your plate or selecting a snack.

Use the serving size guide to the right to better understand what a "healthy" portion size should look like. Open and print the attached "portion size pocket guide" to carry with you wherever you eat, including at home, at a friend's home, at the office, on the go or at a restaurant.

Right-size your portions

Here are a few additional tips to help aid in eating healthier and right-sizing your portions:

- Resist the urge to "super-size" any item.
- Avoid "combo" meals.
- Think "half" ... half a sandwich, half a wrap, half an entrée or half a portion when available.
- [Read food labels](#) and pay attention to the actual serving size and servings per package, especially on "snack size" packages. The servings per package may actually be for more than one serving, which means you should only be eating a portion of the bag.
- When dining with a friend, consider ordering one meal and sharing it.
- Order a "cup" instead of a "bowl."
- Despite what your parents may have taught you, you don't have to finish everything on your plate.

The difference between a standard size cookie today vs. 20 years ago is 220 calories more.



A "healthy" portion size should look like this:



Palm of Hand = 3 ounces

Meats — chicken, turkey, fish



Fist Full = 1 cup

Vegetables, salad, fruit/juice, casseroles, stews, chili, cooked rice/pasta/cereal, yogurt, milk



Handful = 1 ounce

Nuts, raisins, chips, popcorn, pretzels



Thumb = 1 Tablespoon

Salad dressing, peanut butter, cheese — hard and cream



Finger = 1 Teaspoon

Margarine, butter, oil, mayo

Call a health coach

As part of your Railroad benefits, a health coach can help you better understand nutrition and how to eat healthier so you can maintain or lose weight, depending on your specific needs. To connect with a health coach, contact your medical benefit administrator today:

Aetna members: Railroad Employees National Plan: **1-800-842-4044**; NRC/UTU Plan: **1-888-332-8742**

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield members: **1-866-267-3320**

UnitedHealthcare members: **1-866-735-5685**

By making smarter food choices, you may be able to see first-hand the positive impact it can have on your ability to maintain a healthy weight, improve your overall health status and even reduce your health risks.

For more information about nutrition, portion control and tips on how to maintain a healthy weight, visit ChooseMyPlate.gov. You can also learn more about [other nutrition and living healthy topics](#) by reading additional articles available in the *Live Healthy* section of this website.

Be sure to discuss any health-related concerns with your doctor whenever you meet with him/her and also as part of your annual routine physical. The material contained in this article has been selected to provide background and useful information. It is not designed to replace either medical advice or medical treatment.

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