



Estimate portion sizes with 'handy' tool

I want to make sure I'm eating the proper portion sizes, but I don't want to weigh and measure everything I eat. Is there an easy way to estimate servings of different foods?

Actually, there are a number of ways to do this, and one is right at your fingertips.

The 2012 Complete Food and Nutrition Guide from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) includes a "Visual Guide to Amounts," using an average-sized hand to help you estimate. It's an important topic, as portion sizes have swelled (along with the average waist) over the years.

You can use these tips to make sure you eat enough (or more) of:

- Vegetables, fruit, cereal, or cooked beans, rice or pasta: A cup is about the size of your fist.

- Nuts, seeds or dried fruit: An ounce fits in a small cupped handful.

- Seafood: Three ounces of cooked seafood is about the size of your palm (no fingers).

And use similar guides to limit these servings:

- Meat and poultry: Three ounces is about the size of your palm.

- Cheese: An ounce is about the size of your thumb, from the tip to the base.

- Peanut butter: A tablespoon is about the size of the tip of your thumb, down to the first joint.

- Butter, margarine, mayonnaise, oil or sugar: A teaspoon is about the size of a fingertip, from the tip to the first joint.

Of course, your hand size may vary, so you might want to weigh or measure a few items after you do an initial estimate. That way you will know if you can choose a pork chop, for example, that's slightly larger than the palm of your hand, or if you should take one that's a bit smaller.

The "plate method" is another way to estimate portion sizes. All you do is imagine your dinner plate is divided in half, and then one side is divided in half again. Use the first half for non-starchy vegetables — broccoli, zucchini or salad, for example. Use one-fourth of the plate for lean meat, fish, poultry or other lean protein. And use one-fourth for starchy vegetables, such as potatoes, corn or peas, or other starchy foods, including beans and such grains as rice or pasta.

You can find another good visual guide on WebMD at <http://bit.ly/WebMDvisual>. It uses common household objects to help estimate appropriate portion sizes (for example, a small potato is about the size of a computer mouse; 1.5 ounces of hard cheese is about the size of three dice). Take a look and see if that's even more helpful (if not as handy) as the other methods.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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