



For the week of
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Editor:

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Portion control, food choices both count

What's more important in helping you lose weight: how much you eat or what you eat?

Thanks a lot for the trick question. The answer isn't as simple as you might want it to be.

On the one hand, lack of portion control is increasingly being blamed for the "fattening of America." Extra large or "biggie" portions at fast-food restaurants, "big grab" snack-size potato chip bags, and giant-size candy bars all pack in many more calories than more traditionally sized portions.

But consumers are suckers for them — partly because these foods taste good and people like to eat a lot of them, and partly because consumers get a better deal by buying the larger size. There's also the phenomenon ingrained during childhood known as the "clean plate club." Nutritionists recommend ignoring all these cues and concentrating on one that counts the most: Stop eating when you're no longer hungry — even if those french fries were a bargain, even if the food isn't gone yet.

One thing that would help is for people to learn what a serving size really is. A three-ounce portion of meat — one serving, according to nutritionists — is about the size of a deck of cards. One slice of bread or a half-cup of pasta counts as a serving.

On the other hand, eating certain kinds of foods can allow you fill up your plate and eat to your heart's content without over-indulging. Include more fruits, vegetables and fiber in your meals, and you'll feel fuller on fewer calories. For example, the next time you have pasta, top the noodles with some onions, mushrooms, celery, zucchini and chopped spinach sauteed in cooking wine. Then top everything with your favorite sauce. You'll significantly increase the nutrients, fiber and the actual volume of food you eat without increasing calories by much at all.

How much you eat is important, but so is what you eat. Pay attention to both, and you'll be one "biggie" step ahead.

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