

LIFESTYLES WITH SYLVIA



Dear Friends,

Happy May! Here's to hoping that you had a successful four weeks and that you all benefited from our recent Spring Fever Fitness month. To help you continue in the right direction, I'm devoting this month's column to the topic of *portion control*.

As a society, we are eating more calories than ever. Whether they come from restaurants, take-out windows or vending machines, the portion sizes are way out of control. In fact, with the advent of mega-sized meals, jumbo muffins and extra-big drink cups, many of us have completely lost touch with what proper portions look like. We've become so used to oversized helpings that we think they're the norm—and that anything else looks skimpy. As a result, part of learning how to eat more healthfully is retraining your brain to recognize and embrace more realistic portion sizes.

What Is a Healthy Way to Eat?

Just to keep things simple, let's think of your calorie goal as a daily budget. While you can spend your budget any way you want, it makes sense to get the best value for your "money" by choosing the widest selection of items—that is, eating from all the food groups.

That said, hitting all the food groups may be important, but it's just as important to know how much you should eating from each one. To help you manage your budget as you spread your calories around, here's a breakdown of common servings and portion sizes from the different food groups.

Grains and Starchy Vegetables

One serving or "ounce equivalent" is equal to:

- 1 slice bread
- ½ English muffin
- ½ medium (2-ounce) bagel
- 1 ounce cold cereal (varies widely, from ¼ cup granola to 2 cups puffed rice)
- ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, winter squash, corn or hot cereal
- ½ medium (3-4-ounce) potato or sweet potato

Non-starchy Vegetables

One serving is equal to:

- 1 cup leafy green vegetables
- ½ cup cooked vegetables
- ¾ cup vegetable juice

Fruits

One serving is equal to:

- 1 medium fruit
- ½ cup chopped or canned fruit
- ¾ cup fruit juice

Calcium-Rich Foods

One serving is equal to:

- 1 cup milk, soymilk, yogurt or low-fat cottage cheese
- 1½ ounces cheese (preferably reduced-fat)

Proteins

One serving or “ounce equivalent” is equal to:

- 1 ounce cooked meat, poultry, or fish
- ¼ cup cooked beans or legumes
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 ounce (small handful) nuts
- 3 ounces tofu

Oils

One serving is equal to:

- 1 teaspoon oil
- 1 tablespoon vinaigrette dressing
- 2 teaspoons creamy salad dressing
- 5 large olives
- ⅛ avocado

How Much Is Enough?

Recognizing serving sizes won't do much good if you're not sure how many servings you should be eating. Here's a look at the minimum number of servings you should aim to eat daily from each food group:

Grains and Starchy Vegetables: 3 servings

Non-starchy Vegetables: 5-10 servings

Fruits: 2 servings

Calcium-Rich Foods: 2 servings

Proteins: 5-6 (1 ounce) servings

Servings versus Portions

What's the difference between servings and portions? A serving is an established standard unit of measure, whereas a portion is how much food we actually eat. For example, while ½ cup of pasta is technically “one serving,” few of us would actually consider that a “portion.” A pasta *portion* of 1 cup, or even 1½ cups, is more realistic. So if that's your portion of pasta, just keep in mind that you'll be eating two or three “servings” of grain-based foods when you dig in.

Divide Your Plate

Here's an easy way to ensure that you are eating a good balance of foods. Imagine a plate and divide it in half. Fill one half with vegetables. Divide the other half into two equal portions (quarters), and fill one with lean protein. Fill the other with a whole-grain food or starchy vegetable.

Measuring with Your Eyes

Eating on the run? Use the chart below to help you visualize the correct portion sizes of the foods you eat most often. When serving yourself, make an effort to measure out portions and you will soon be able to "eyeball" them accurately.

1 teaspoon	About the size of your fingertip (tip to middle joint); fits into the screw cap of a water bottle
1 tablespoon	About the size of your thumb tip (tip to middle joint)
½ cup	A fruit or vegetable that fits into the palm of your hand; about the size of a tennis ball
¼ cup	A golf ball
1 ounce nuts	Fits into the cupped palm of a child's hand
1 cup cereal	About the size of a woman's fist or a baseball
1 medium bagel	A hockey puck
1 ounce cheese	About the size of 2 dominoes or 4 dice
3 ounce meat	About the size of a deck of cards or a cassette audiotape
1 medium potato	About the size of a computer mouse

As you can see, there's a lot to learn when it comes to serving sizes and portion control. Of course, that's why knowledge is the key to weight control, and I hope all of this information will help you reduce the number of calories you consume and move you closer to your goal.

Next month's column will focus on using smaller serving pieces, how to eat, and useful tips on food shopping and reading food labels.

Until next time, happy healthful eating,

Sylvia

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