

## A Guide to Sensible Portions: It All Adds Up

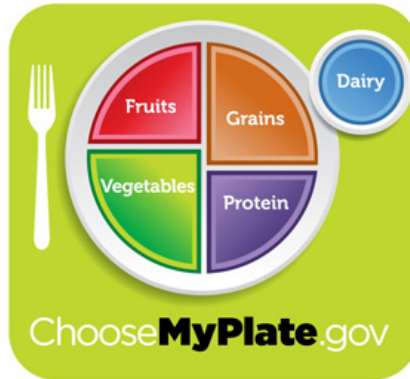
It's not only *what* you eat, but also *how much* that counts. Your portion sizes have a direct effect on the number of calories you eat. Along with making wise food choices, eating sensible portions is key for a healthy weight.

### Size-Wise Guidelines

A portion is the amount you choose to eat of any food. There are no “right” or “wrong” portions, but it’s important to know how the amounts of foods you eat compare to your recommended daily food group totals. Being portion aware helps you plan your day’s food choices to get enough calories and nutrients without overdoing it on calories which, over time, can lead to weight gain. What about serving sizes on Nutrition Facts labels? Be aware that these may differ from the portions you choose to eat. Use label serving sizes to identify the calories and nutrients in foods, compare similar foods and calculate the calories and nutrients contained in your portion.

### How Much Should You Eat?

Your calorie needs determine how much you should eat. The



Source: US Department of Agriculture

chart below shows examples of the calories, food group servings, oils and “extras” (so-called “empty” calories) some people might eat in a typical day. To find what’s right for you, go to [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov) and click on “Get a Personalized Plan.”

### Real-Life Portions

To know how your portions stack up against recommendations, determine your portion sizes and then add up your daily totals for each food group, oils and “empty” calories. It is okay to eat portions that differ from standard amounts, just be aware of how they add up over the day. The **Counting Portions** chart on the back page shows some typical portions and their **MyPlate** equivalents.

### Be Portion-Sensible

- **Measure and weigh.** Measure or weigh some of your typical portions to spot-check how much you are eating—especially if you are gaining weight.
- **Resign from the “Clean-Plate Club.”** Change your mindset so you don’t feel obligated to finish every morsel on your

Recommended Daily Total for Three Calorie Levels			
Food Group	1600 calories	2000 calories	2600 calories
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately active/active children 5-8 years old</li> <li>• Sedentary women 51+ years of age</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately active teen girls 12-18 years old</li> <li>• Moderately active women 26-50 years old</li> <li>• Sedentary men 61+ years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderately active teen boys</li> <li>• Moderately active men 26-45 years old</li> <li>• Active men 56-75 years old</li> </ul>
Grains	5 oz.	6 oz.	9 oz.
Vegetables	2 cups	2-1/2 cups	3-1/2 cups
Fruits	1-1/2 cups	2 cups	2 cups
Dairy	3 cups*	3 cups	3 cups
Protein Foods	5 oz.	5-1/2 oz.	6-1/2 oz.
Oils	5 tsp.	6 tsp.	8 tsp.
“Empty” Calories** Limit to	120 calories	260 calories	360 calories

\*For children ages 2 to 8 years, the recommendation is 2 cups of milk.

\*\*“Empty” calories are calories from solid fats and/or added sugars. They add enjoyment to food choices, but few or no nutrients. Such calories (generally between 100 to 300 calories per day, depending on individual calorie needs) can be used to select foods that contain extra fats and added sugars (e.g., sauces, butter, syrup, candy, whole milk instead of skim milk, higher-fat meats instead of lean meats) or alcoholic beverages.

plate. Focus on enjoying every bite, rather than on eating while doing other things.

- **Downsize your plate.** Use a smaller plate or glass so moderate portions look “right-size.” (Did you know that many drinking glasses hold 16 ounces or two servings? And double the calories, too!)
- **Trim your portions.** Pick one or two higher-calorie foods at each meal and trim your portion by about one-third. Fill the gaps with veggies and fruits; most people don’t eat enough of these nutrient-rich foods.
- **Control your hunger.** Going too long between meals may lead to overeating. Plan to eat a meal or small snack

regularly—about every three to four hours.

- **Share and share alike.** Split a bagel, sandwich or dessert with a friend.
- **Opt for small servings.** When eating out, choose a “small” or “regular” instead of a “large” or “super-size” portion.
- **Divide and conquer.** In a restaurant, eat half your portion now and take the rest home.
- **It’s okay to say “no.”** Feel free to politely decline offers of large portions or second helpings—unless, of course, you are still hungry.

### Counting Portions

Food Group Equivalents*	Examples of Real-Life Portions	Count as:
<b>Grains – count as 1 oz.:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 slice bread or 6-inch flour tortilla</li> <li>• 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal</li> <li>• 1/2 cup cooked cereal, rice, pasta</li> <li>• 3 cups popped popcorn</li> <li>• 1/2 small bun, bagel, English muffin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandwich (2 slices bread) . . . . . 2 oz.</li> <li>• Large bowl of cereal . . . . . 2 oz.</li> <li>• 2 cups spaghetti . . . . . 4 oz.</li> <li>• 15 cups popcorn (movie-size). . . . . 5 oz.</li> <li>• 1 hamburger bun. . . . . 2 oz.</li> </ul>	
<b>Vegetables –count as 1 cup:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 cups raw leafy vegetables</li> <li>• 1 cup cooked or raw vegetables</li> <li>• 1 medium baked potato</li> <li>• 1 cup 100% vegetable juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrée salad . . . . . 1-1/2 cups</li> <li>• 6 baby carrots . . . . . 1/2 cup</li> <li>• 1 large baked potato . . . . . 1-1/2 cups</li> <li>• 10 regular-size fries . . . . . 1/2 cup</li> </ul>	
<b>Fruits—count as 1 cup:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 medium apple, banana, orange</li> <li>• 1 cup chopped or canned fruit</li> <li>• 1 cup 100% fruit juice</li> <li>• 1/2 cup dried fruit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bowl of sliced strawberries . . . . . 1 cup</li> <li>• Snack cup of canned fruit. . . . . 1/2 cup</li> <li>• Tall glass of orange juice. . . . . 1 cup</li> <li>• Handful of raisins . . . . . 1/2 cup</li> </ul>	
<b>Dairy—count as 1 cup:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup milk, yogurt, calcium-fortified soymilk</li> <li>• 1-1/2 oz. natural cheese</li> <li>• 2 oz. process cheese</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 oz. carton yogurt . . . . . 3/4 cup</li> <li>• 1 cup chocolate milk . . . . . 1 cup</li> <li>• 2 slices hard cheese. . . . . 1 cup</li> <li>• 1/2 cup pudding prepared with milk . . . . . 1/2 cup</li> </ul>	
<b>Protein Foods—count as 1 oz.:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 oz. cooked lean meat, fish, poultry</li> <li>• 1/4 cup cooked dry beans</li> <li>• 1 tablespoon peanut butter</li> <li>• 1/2 oz. nuts or seeds (~2 Tbs.)</li> <li>• 2 tablespoons hummus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1/2 lb. hamburger . . . . . 8 oz.</li> <li>• 1 small can tuna, drained . . . . . 2-3 oz.</li> <li>• 1 cup split pea soup. . . . . 2 oz.</li> <li>• Peanut butter in a sandwich. . . . . 2 oz.</li> <li>• Handful of peanuts (~1/4 cup . . . . . 2 oz.</li> <li>• 1 soy protein patty . . . . . 2 oz.</li> </ul>	

Keep portions of oils, fats and sweets small to keep your calories in line with your energy needs.  
 \* Based on USDA’s MyPlate.gov guidance.