

# Portion Control

How can you deal with oversized servings? It can be hard to stop eating when there is tons of delicious food to enjoy.

A common answer to this problem is to ignore the rest of the food and only eat proper portions of each item. Sadly, that is easier said than done.

First of all, studies indicate that when people are offered larger portions of food, they tend to eat more of it. In one study, participants ate 30% more calories when offered the largest portion of an entrée, compared to what they ate when they were offered the smallest portion (Am J Clin Nutr 2002;76(6):1207-1213). When there is lots of food on your plate, it can skew your perception of what you've eaten and make it hard to stop eating.

Second, even when you pay attention to portion size, you also have to consider WHAT you are eating. Even small portions of high-fat, high-calorie foods can interfere with the best weight loss intentions.

Take a look at the chart below. It demonstrates that guessing is no substitute for properly measuring servings. Take the time to



It is easy to eat too much cheese – a one-ounce portion is 5 cubes, about the size of 5 dice.

## Avoid Pitfalls of Oversized Servings

- *Eating out of the bag.* Eating snacks straight out of the bag makes it very easy to eat much more than one serving without realizing it.
- *Pouring tons of dressing on your salad.* Dressing is often surprisingly calorie dense. Try pouring just a few capfuls on your salad instead.
- *Using an oversized bowl.* This mistake occurred in both our cereal and ice cream tests. Use smaller bowls to serve food and start measuring the portions that you put into those bowls.
- *Slathering enough butter or margarine to thickly and thoroughly cover a whole slice of bread.* That's too much butter! Think about the size of your thumb's tip and use that much (or less!) instead.

## Serving Size Test Results

Our test staff *guessed* on serving sizes using the foods shown below. Their guesses for a single portion were often much more than one serving! Follow the tips on the right so that you can use actual serving sizes with these common foods.

Item	Guess	Actual portion	Tip for better portion control
Cereal	3 cups	1 cup	Use a smaller bowl and a measuring cup.
Cheese	3 ounces	1 ounce	Picture 5 dice to make a single ounce portion.
Meat/poultry	9 ounces	3 ounces	Visualize a deck of cards: that's one serving.
Bagged snacks	3-5 ounces	1 ounce	One or two handfuls is all you need.
Salad dressing	3-4 ounces	2 tablespoons	Try two capfuls.
Ice cream	3 cups	1/2 cup	Use a half-cup scoop and a smaller dish.
Butter	1 tablespoon	1 teaspoon	Use the tip of your thumb as a guide.

*The Dietary Guidelines for Americans explain, "Portion Size [is] the amount of a food consumed in one eating occasion."*