



Cassara Consulting
"Your Neighborhood Nutritionists"

Dietitian - Nutritionist - Education - Counseling - Insurance Accepted



1345 Kuser Rd, Suite 5 - Hamilton, NJ 08619 - phone: (609) 585-8400 - visit us on the web at: www.cassaraconsulting.com - email: info@cassaraconsulting.com

Kids and Portion Control



shironsov/iStock/Getty Images Plus/Getty Images

Kids who follow MyPlate are eating well for healthy growth and development. But, many kids today suffer from "portion distortion." Though MyPlate provides the number of daily servings of different foods groups, sometimes we overlook the specific amount of food in one serving size. When talking about what kids eat or drink, keep these definitions in mind.

Serving Size vs. Portion Size

A serving is a specific amount of food or drink. It is defined by a common measurement, such as cups, ounces or tablespoons. MyPlate provides serving sizes. Also, the Nutrition Facts label on foods provides serving sizes. One tricky thing is that these servings may not be the same. Many of the MyPlate serving sizes are smaller than those listed on the Nutrition Facts label. Since MyPlate provides how much of what food your child needs for good health, it's best to use these serving sizes.

A portion is the amount of food that happens to end up on the plate. Think of portion size as the actual amount of food kids choose to eat at breakfast, lunch, dinner or as a snack. Portions may be larger or smaller than the recommended serving sizes. If a portion is larger, your child may be at an increased risk for gaining weight. So, teach your kids to make portion sizes equal to MyPlate serving sizes.

Proper Portion Sizes: Give Kids a Visual

One reason kids may not be eating appropriately sized portions based on the recommended MyPlate serving sizes is that they may not recognize what a reasonable portion looks like. What does one-half cup of pasta look like? What about three ounces of chicken or two tablespoons of peanut butter?

The good news is that kids don't need a measuring cup or scale to measure the portions they should eat — instead, they can visualize them by using familiar objects, such as a tennis ball or DVD, that are similar in size to recommended serving sizes. Before they eat or drink, they can think of the relevant object and choose a portion that matches its size.

Here are some tips to help you and your kids visualize portion sizes:

Food		Portion Size		About the Size of...
<i>Grains Group</i>				
Bread		1 ounce or 1 regular slice		DVD cover
Dry cereal		1 ounce or 1 cup		Baseball
Cooked cereal, rice or pasta		1 ounce or ½ cup		½ baseball
Pancake or waffle		1 ounce or 1 small piece (6 inches)		DVD
Bagel, hamburger bun		1 ounce or ½ piece		Hockey puck
Cornbread		1 piece		Bar of soap

<i>Fruits Group</i>				
Orange, apple, pear		1 small fruit (2½ inches in diameter)		Tennis ball
Raisins		¼ cup		Golf ball

<i>Vegetables Group</i>				
Baked potato		1 medium		Computer mouse

Vegetables, chopped or salad		1 cup		Baseball
------------------------------	--	-------	--	----------

<i>Dairy Group</i>				
Fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt		1 cup		Baseball
Cheese		1½ ounces natural cheese or 2 ounces processed cheese		9-volt battery
Ice cream		½ cup		½ baseball

<i>Protein Foods Group</i>				
Lean beef or poultry		3 ounces		Deck of cards
Grilled or baked fish		3 ounces		Checkbook
Peanut butter		2 tablespoons		Ping-pong ball

<i>Oils Group</i>				
Margarine		1 teaspoon		Standard postage stamp
Oil or salad dressing		1 teaspoon		Standard cap on a 16-ounce water bottle

Helps Kids Listen to Their Bodies

Also, help your kids listen to internal hunger and fullness cues. Discuss what it feels like to be hungry with your child. And, talk about how it feels to be full. For older children, review differences between physical hunger and boredom, sadness or fatigue. When kids listen to their bodies, they are less likely to overeat. Help them understand it is OK to stop eating when they feel full, even if there is food left on the plate.

Reviewed July 2018 by Barbara Gordon, RDN, LD. Published August 15, 2018. To learn more healthy tips, visit www.eatright.org and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from www.eatright.org.