



The Beacon

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"Guiding your way to better health management"

Tricks to Make Yourself Eat Less

The food industry knows a powerful truth about one of humanities weaknesses: The more food that is put in front of us, the more we will eat. This is generally true even for people who are weight-conscious or who just feel better when they eat less.

It's easy to spot the "supersize" portion trend at a restaurant when you receive a giant bowl of pasta or a six-inch-high pile of onion rings -- it's less easy to escape the same mindset when you eat at home.

Because Americans are eating more food than ever before, 66% of them are overweight or obese. * *Being overweight or obese increases risk for diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, joint problems and even some types of cancer.*

The degree to which typical portion sizes have increased over the years is astounding. For example, fountain sodas during the 1950s and 1960s were about seven ounces, compared with 12 to 64 ounces these days. A typical bag of popcorn at the movies was once about five to six cups. Now

a large bucket with butter flavor contains up to 20 cups and 1,640 calories. A pasta entrée at a restaurant is now double what it used to be. Eating at home? Standard plates, bowls and glasses are bigger, too -- so we fill them up with more food.

HOW MUCH ARE YOU EATING?

The first step toward eating sensibly is to know how much you're consuming. This is much harder than it sounds. In one informal experiment conducted by a food writer in New York City, four expert nutritionists were given heaping plates of food (including pasta, risotto and sandwiches) and asked to estimate calorie and fat content. No one came even remotely close.

Nutritional guidelines generally suggest eating a set number of "servings" of meats, vegetables and other food groups. But a serving, which is usually defined in ounces, tablespoons or cups, is not the same as a portion, which is the actual amount of food served -- at home or at a restaurant.

Some Examples: For grain products, a "serving" equals one slice of bread, one cup of ready-to-eat cold cereal or

one-half cup of pasta. A restaurant order of linguine is likely to be three cups -- nearly a whole day's recommended intake of grain! And a single bagel, in today's standard size of five ounces, equals *five* slices of bread.

DEVELOP PORTION AWARENESS

Dietary guidelines, such as cups, ounces and tablespoons, aren't easy to eyeball. So, measure out the portion you ordinarily take. Then measure out a standard serving of meat, vegetables, pasta, etc. See what each looks like in comparison.

It's important to remember if your usual portion of meat is actually two servings, you don't necessarily have to cut back during that meal -- just know that you have consumed nearly a day's allocation of meat and adjust the rest of the day's intake accordingly.

RESTAURANT SMARTS

Portion inflation is most out of control in restaurants -- where the average American eats four times a week. To defend yourself against

today's supersize restaurant meals, follow these steps...

Have a snack at home. About an hour before eating out, eat some fruit, low-fat yogurt or vegetable-based soup.

Have the right appetizer. Don't skip the appetizer in an attempt to cut down on the size of your meal. Order a soup, salad or a vegetable appetizer to fill up, and tell the waiter not to bring the bread basket.

Order small entrées. Or order a half-size portion, if available. Or share a full-size entrée with your dining companion.

Eat only half of the meal. When you order an entrée for yourself, eat half and ask the waiter to wrap up the rest to take home.

Slow down! Eat at a leisurely pace to give your body time to catch up with your appetite, and stop before you're full.

PORTION CONTROL AT HOME

Choose smaller dinnerware. We're conditioned to think that a meal-size portion is what fills a plate. That's why you should set your table with eight to 10-ounce (not 20-ounce) glasses... 10-inch (rather than 12-inch) dinner plates... and bowls that hold two cups rather than four.

Divide your plate. Allocate space on your plate to meet healthful dietary recommendations -- fill half with vegetables and fruit... one-fourth with meat, fish or another protein source... and one-fourth with grains or starchy vegetables.

Create your own snack portions. To control your consumption of pretzels, chips and other snack foods,

read the label to see how many servings the package contains -- and portion it out into that number of plastic, re-sealable bags. Do the same with three-ounce portions of deli meats.



ASK A NURSE

Q: My toes and fingertips are always freezing. Should I be concerned?

A: Probably not. Cold hands and feet are fairly common and, in certain cases, a sign of good health. People whose blood pressure is low but healthy often have concentrated blood flow in the torso, leaving their extremities chilly, indoors and out. If you experience hair or memory loss, too, however, you may have hypothyroidism; numbness or tingling could signal a vitamin B₁₂ deficiency. A simple blood test can detect either, and both are treatable. But, if frostiness is paired with pain, burning, or drastic whitening of fingers or toes, it could be an indication of peripheral vascular disease (spasm of the arteries), which is more serious; you should see your doctor ASAP.

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Q: What's the best way to use caffeine to boost energy?

A: Have a cup of coffee in the morning and another cup midday to beat the after lunch lull. Because caffeine combats the chemicals that produce sleep, avoid it in the evening.

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Q: Is it okay to take an OTC sleep aid to help nod off?

A: It's fine to rely on nonprescription remedies from time

to time. But if you're prone to nights spent tossing and turning, ask your doctor about prescription medication. Unlike OTC sleeping pills, which lose effectiveness the more they're taken the less likely you are to develop a tolerance to Rx drugs.

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Recipe Corner

Chopped Chicken Salad with Apples and Walnuts

This salad provides a generous portion of fiber-filled vegetables and protein-rich chicken, plus the added benefit of omega-3 packed walnuts.

1-2 cup chopped romaine lettuce
4-5 oz chicken breast, cooked, cooled, and chopped
½ cup canned chickpeas, rinsed and drained
½ med Fuji or McIntosh apple, chopped
¼ cup chopped cucumber (with peel)
¼ cup chopped tomato
¼ cup chopped avocado
¼ cup chopped celery
2 scallions, minced
1 Tbsp chopped walnuts
2 Tbsp reduced-calorie raspberry vinaigrette

PLACE lettuce in large bowl. Add chicken, chickpeas, apple, cucumber, tomato, avocado, celery, scallions, and walnuts. Drizzle with vinaigrette and toss to coat.



This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition are Bottom Line/Health, and Prevention magazine.