

# FOOD PORTIONS

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Sometimes eating healthy isn't so much about what you eat, but how much you eat. As a society, Americans use food for lots of reasons beyond nourishing the body. So it is easy for portions to increase over time and easy to grab something to eat out of habit rather than hunger. Here is a list of ten things you can try to help moderate food portions in no particular order. Hope you find them helpful.

## 10 strategies to help you eat healthier and control portions.

1. Choose your dinnerware carefully. Plates should be 9 inches in diameter, which was the size in the 1950's. The average dinner plate in the 1980's was 10 inches and more recently plates are 11-12 inches. Since you usually fill your plate to look a certain way, the bigger the plate the bigger the portions. Beverages glasses and bowls have also gotten bigger in the past few decades. Pour a bowl of cereal, ice cream or soup then measure how much you have. You may be surprised by the number of servings you are eating.
2. Minimize distractions during meals and snacks such as television, reading, work, Facebook, etc... It is hard to recognize your body's cues for feeling full if you are focused on other things. COVID hasn't helped with this with eating alone or working from home. You might just find you are more satisfied with less food if you pay attention to how you feel, what the food tastes like, how hot/cold it is, how crunchy it is, etc...
3. Portion food on plate or napkin rather than just eating out of packages. If you aren't sure how much to portion, start with the serving size on the food label and if you need more you can go back. But having an open box or bag beside you will make portion control more difficult since you have no idea how much you consumed.
4. Cancel your membership to the "clean plate club." If you always eat until the food is gone, you likely are on "automatic pilot" when eating and could be eating more than your body needs. This can be a hard habit to break, but start by leaving one bite of food on your plate.
5. Cut up your foods as you eat instead of cutting everything up before you start. Again, it is a technique to slow you down and make you think about what you are doing.
6. Don't market food to yourself. When you are done eating your meal, put leftovers away in containers that you can't see through, put in cabinets instead of leaving on the counter and don't keep food in your work area unless you need it for medical reasons. You tend to eat with your eyes first, so if you don't have food in drawers, in your car or in plain sight you will be less likely to eat when you aren't hungry.
7. Wait 15 minutes before taking second helpings. When your stomach has enough food in it and it sends out a message to tell you to stop eating, it takes about 15-20 minutes for the message to reach your brain. It is not an efficient messaging system, for sure. So it is important to wait about 15 minutes before taking seconds so you give your brain and belly a chance to catch up with each other before you decide if you have room for more. If you do decide you have room, your second helping should be half the size the first one was since you are not starting out on an empty stomach.
8. Don't eat the last few bites on your plate just so you don't have to put it away or throw it away. These are often extra calories since you already decided you were satisfied. If this is difficult to do, try wrapping them for another meal, have a container in the freezer where you can add leftovers that later on can be added to make soups or casseroles or you could even consider starting to compost.
9. Pay attention to your body's cues for hunger and fullness. You want to eat when you are hungry, but not so hungry you want to eat everyone's food at the table. On the flip side, you want to stop eating when the feeling of hunger goes away, not until you are uncomfortable or bloated. Remember, if you are feeling full when you put your fork down, in 15-20 minutes you will really be uncomfortable.
10. Consider how your food is packaged and served. Studies have shown consumers tend to assume taller packages have more food in them than wider or shorter packages, pictures of bigger portions on the package encourages bigger portions on the plate, and the larger the serving bowls and spoons are the more you take.

