

Portion Sizes

What is a portion of food?

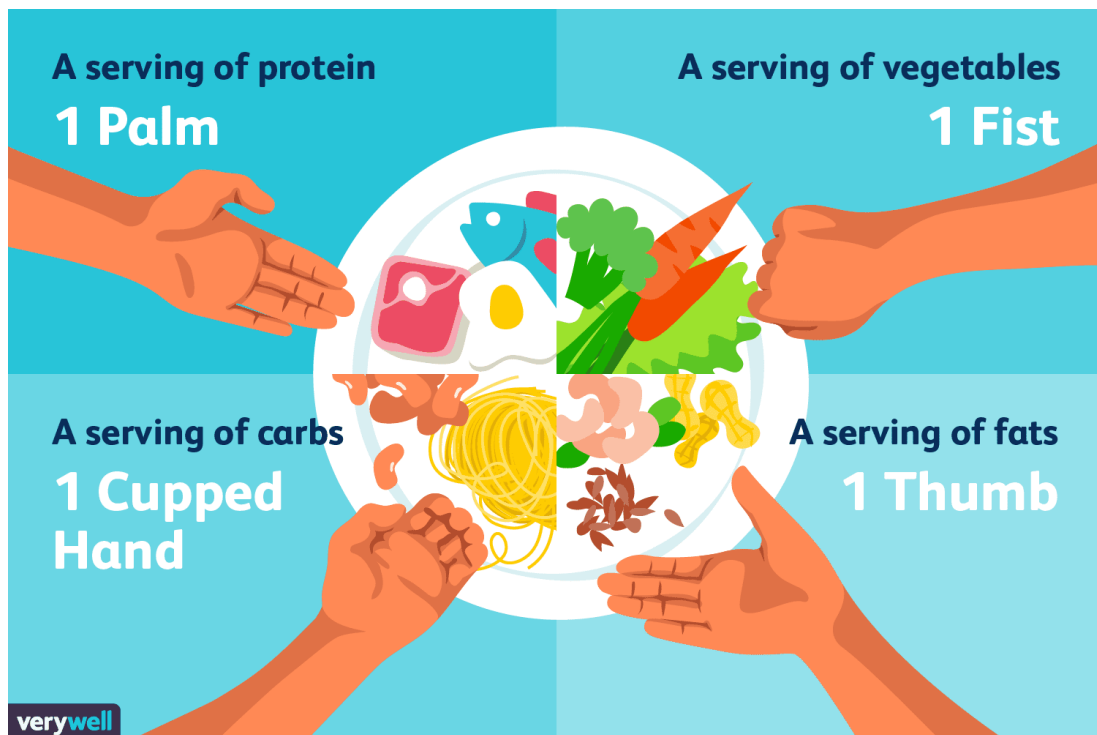
A portion is the amount of a food that you eat at one time, for example how much food you put on your plate at a meal or how much is in a packet.

Why are portion sizes important?

The key to eating a balanced diet is to eat a wide variety of foods in appropriate amounts. Making healthier choices and choosing to eat some foods more often, and in larger amounts, than others.

It is important to be aware of portion sizes, as eating too much or not enough of any type of food can increase your risk of health problems. This is because your body may be getting too much or too little of what it needs to stay healthy.

As every person is different, the recommended number of portions for each food will vary according to age, sex, size, health and other factors, but this sheet provides a good place to get you started.



Recommended daily portions

(Based on 1500 kcal for women, 1800 kcal for men)

Fruit and vegetables

Women: 5+ portions

Men: 5+ portions

Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta, and other starchy carbohydrates

Women: 7 portions

Men: 8 portions

Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

Women: 2 portions

Men: 3 portions

Dairy and alternatives

Women: 3 portions

Men: 3 portions

Oil and spreads

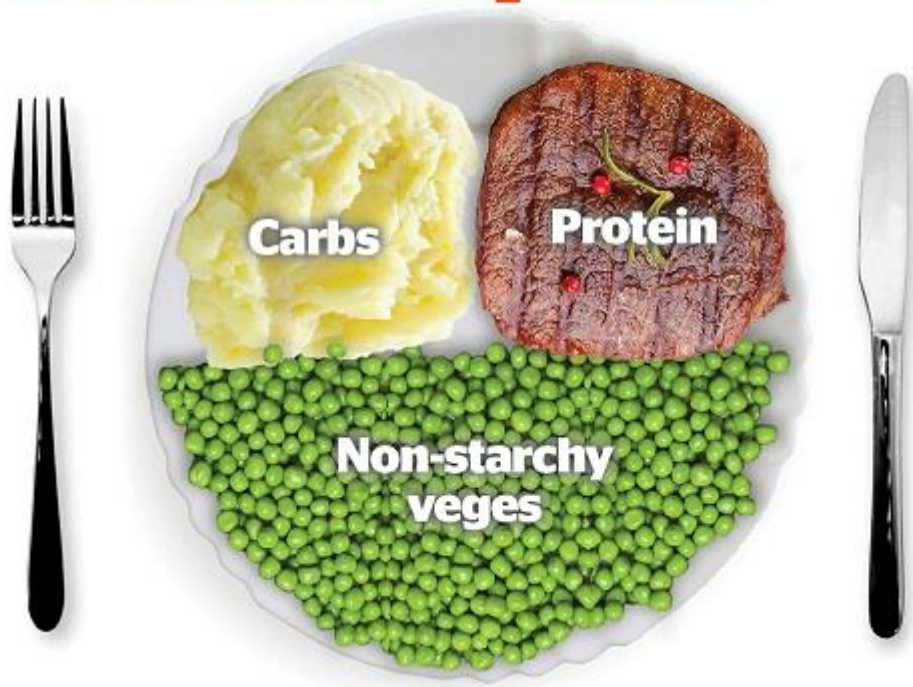
Women: 1 portion

Men: 2 portions

Plate size

How big are your plates at home? It might sound silly, but I bet it wasn't something you considered when you purchased them. If you have large plates, you are more likely to eat larger portions which will fill the plate. Making a simple swap to slightly smaller crockery might be a good idea.

The ideal plate



Meal sizes over the years



When did you last eat in a local pub offering "two for one" deals? You know the type, huge menu of choices with all the pub favourites, generally for less than a tenner each.

Have you noticed how the portion sizes are getting bigger? They have increased by almost 40% in the last 10yrs, but because it's such a great offer and we're out enjoying ourselves, it's very easy to over-indulge.

Eating the right amount of food goes hand in hand with having a balanced diet. Often, if you're struggling to lose weight or shift those last few pounds, your portion sizes could be the reason why.

So, how much should we be eating?

The guideline daily amount of calories is 2,000Kcal for women and 2,500Kcal for men, based on the estimated average energy requirements from UK government guidelines on nutrition.

However, these are just guidelines and it's important to recognise that, in reality, there's no such thing as an energy requirement that will suit everyone.

As you know by now, the amount of calories you need varies depending on your weight, gender and how active you are, as well as on your state of health.

It's also important to recognise that your energy requirements will change; many people find they gain weight when they retire, for example, and this can be because of a change in activity levels compared with when they were working.



The NHS recommend that every day, a healthy adult should eat:

- **5 or more portions or fruit and vegetables** (eg: 1 portion is about equal to either 1 apple, pear or banana or 3 heaped tablespoons of cooked carrots, peas or sweetcorn)
- **3 -4 servings of potato, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy carbohydrates.** (eg: 2 slices of bread or a medium sized jacket potato)
- **2-3 servings of fish, eggs, meat and other proteins** (eg: 90g of cooked meat about the size of a deck of cards)
- **3 servings of dairy and alternatives** (eg: 250ml of semi-skimmed milk or some cheese about the sizes of a small box of matches)
- **2 -3 servings of unsaturated oils and spreads** (eg: 1 teaspoon of olive oil or sunflower oil)

- 6-8 drinks a day of water, low-fat milk, sugar free drinks, including tea and coffee all count. (Limit fruit juice and smoothies to 150ml a day)

How does this compare to your daily intake?

They also suggest that foods and drinks high in sugar and fat should be eaten less often. Snacks should be limited to 2 -3 a day with each snack no more than 120kcal

[Here is a link](#) to a really useful NHS page containing more examples of portion sizes and food types

TOP TIPS

1. Try to eat regularly, and have 3 meals a day. Eating at regular times will help to keep you alert and full of energy and also stop you from snacking and choosing the unhealthy option
2. Carry some fruit with you to work. You're more likely to eat it if you know that if you don't, it will go off and start to smell in your bag!
3. Avoid white foods where possible (*with the exception of cauliflower*). eg: instead of white bread, try brown. Instead of brown bread try 'half and half'. Instead of 'half and half' bread, try wholegrain etc
4. Try grating fresh cauliflower and try using this instead of white rice in a curry or instead of potato on a cottage pie! You may be pleasantly surprised!
5. Eat green! The darker green, the better!