



Healthy Eating Information: A Tool for Patients

The Scoop on Estimating Food Serving Size

- ❖ Eating a healthy diet is important for diabetes control. Blood sugar readings are affected by the amount of carbohydrate you eat.
- ❖ Cholesterol levels are influenced by how much saturated fat you eat.
- ❖ Body weight is determined by the balance between calories consumed and calories burned.

Learning how to estimate portion size of your foods will help you control your blood sugar, cholesterol, and weight. Like anything else, when you first start it will be difficult, it gets easier with practice.

Using measuring cups and spoons at first may help you learn what different portions “look like.” You can try to remember the level on your bowl one cup of cereal reaches, or how much of your plate is taken up by a cup of rice. After doing this a few times, you will be able to know the serving size without measuring it. This will be helpful when you eat in a restaurant, since serving sizes are often large. If you are given more than the amount you have planned for that meal, you will know whether you need to

- ❖ Leave some on your plate
- ❖ Share it with a friend
- ❖ Take the leftovers home

There are other easy ways to help determine portion size. For example, you can compare your fist with a measuring cup and use that as your reference.

- ❖ A small fist will be about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
- ❖ A medium fist is about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup
- ❖ A large fist is about 1 cup.

A piece of cheese the size of your thumb is about 1 ounce, and a 3-ounce piece of cooked chicken is the size of a deck of cards.

Understanding Food Nutrition Labels

To understand what is in the foods you eat, it is important to learn how to read the Nutrition Facts listed on their labels. The first thing to check is the serving size. If you are going to eat twice as much as what the label calls “1 serving” then you will need to double the number of grams listed. If you will eat half the amount, you will have to reduce the grams by one-half.

Some foods say “No Sugar Added” on the label. By reading the nutrition facts, you may find that the food still has a lot of carbohydrates. Since the total carbohydrate counting grams not just the sugar, affects your blood sugar, you need to read the label carefully. Some foods, like fruit juice or fruit spreads, have “no added sugar” but can contain very high amounts of natural sugar.

“Sugar alcohols” are often used to sweeten “sugar-free” foods. The label may say that they contribute no “usable carbohydrate.” You will need to add half the actual weight to the carb count.

Fiber is a type of carb that does not raise blood glucose levels. Fiber grams can be subtracted from the total carbohydrate count.



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Serving Size

Check to see if your serving size is the same as listed on the label. Adjust the caloric and nutrient values to match your serving size.

Calories

Check to see how many calories a serving will add to your daily total. Your size and activity level will determine the total calories. Check with your physician about the number of calories needed a day.

Total Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are found in many foods such as potatoes, bread, vegetables, milk and fruits. Carbohydrates are the primary source of energy of energy for your body. Check with your physician about the amount of carbohydrates needed a day.

Dietary Fiber

Fiber is important in your diet. Fruits, vegetables, whole-grain foods, beans and legumes are good sources of fiber. Check with your physician about the amount of fiber recommended a day.

Sugars

Both natural and added sugars are identified on the label. Check with your physician about limiting sugar in your daily meal plan.

Vitamins and Minerals

Make it your goal to get 100% of the recommended vitamins and minerals each day. Make your food choices count.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup (114 g)		Serving Size 1/2 cup (114 g)	
Servings Per Container 4		Servings Per Container 4	
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 30		
		% Daily Value	
Total Fat 3 g			5%
Saturated Fat 0 g			0%
Cholesterol 0 mg			0%
Sodium 300 mg			13%
Total Carbohydrate 13 g			4%
Dietary Fiber 3 g			12%
Sugars 3 g			
Protein 3 g			
Vitamin A 80%	Vitamin C 60%		
Calcium 4%	Iron 4%		
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.			
	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65 g	80 g
Sat. Fat	Less than	20 g	25 g
Cholesterol	Less than	300 mg	300 mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400 mg	2,400 mg
Total Carbohydrate		300 g	375 g
Fiber		25 g	30 g
Calories per gram:			
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4	Protein 4	

Additional nutrients may be listed on some food labels:

g = grams (about 28 g = 1 ounce)
mg = milligrams (1,000 mg = 1 g)

Total Fat

Limit your calories from fat. Choose foods with less than 30% of the calories are from fat.

Saturated Fats

Saturated fat is the bad fat. Choose foods with less than 10% of the calories are from saturated fat.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is found in foods such as meat, fish, eggs, and whole-milk products such as cheese and butter. Choose foods that will total less than 300 m of cholesterol a day.

Sodium

Too much sodium or salt can worsen high blood pressure. Sodium should total less than 2,400 mg per day or lower depending on your health. Check with your physician about the amount of sodium you should have in your diet.

Protein

Most protein is from animal sources such as meat, fish and cheese. Check for high saturated fat and cholesterol. Choose skim or low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese products. Other types of protein can be from vegetables, grains and cereals.

Daily Values

These daily values apply to people who eat 2,000 to 2,500 calories each day. Ask your physician if your daily value should be lower.

Keeping a Food Diary

Many people find that writing down all the foods they eat and drink is a good first step in learning about a healthy diet. It is a good way to begin to look at how many carbohydrates, saturated fats and calories you are eating. It is very helpful to bring your food diary when you see your diabetes educator, dietitian or doctor. It will allow them to evaluate your eating patterns and help you develop a plan for healthy eating.