

It's More Than Just What You Eat. It's About Portion Size!

Welcome to National Nutrition Month! This month's theme is all about Eating Right. Eating right means choosing a variety of nutrient-dense foods, such as whole grains; dark-colored green, red, orange, and yellow fruits and vegetables; as well as low-fat dairy foods and lean meats. Eating right also means enjoying all types of foods in controlled portions. Obtaining an understanding of portions is the first step toward achieving and maintaining a healthy weight and feeling your best.

Over the past 20 years portions have really exploded. What used to be a large soda is now a small, candy used to come with one serving in a package and now it's four, and meals out were never quite as large as they are today. The challenge for children is that they have never been exposed to "normal" portions. Part of the concern with childhood weight gain is the over-consumption of calories and not enough activity. Helping children balance their plates and their snacks with proper portions of foods will help them establish healthier eating habits for a lifetime.

When planning meals at home, aim for "25-25-50", which means one-quarter of the plate should consist of lean protein, one-quarter whole grains, and the other fifty percent fruits and vegetables. Lean protein foods include chicken, fish, lean beef, legumes, and tofu. Whole grains include pasta and rice. Have your children help you plan the meal and then ask, "Is our plate balanced?" Are all food groups – lean protein, dairy, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains – represented on your plate?

Also, when snacking, encourage children to look at the food labels. Note the serving sizes for the snack and the total number of servings in a bag. Do the math. Assume there are 10 servings in a bag of chips and one serving is about 12 chips at 150 calories per serving. If a child eats the whole bag in two days then they have consumed 1,500 calories from chips alone. That's a big number, especially when you consider that many children may only need that many calories in an entire day.

Another great tool to help you and your family better understand portions is the MyPyramid Menu Planner tool. It can be accessed at www.mypyramid.gov. Simply input your personal information and start logging in the foods you eat. This tool will help you understand whether or not you are eating the correct portions of food and/or if you may be consuming too much added fats or sugar.

Take the time to investigate your portions and get on track to Eating Right!



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*Get on Track
to Eating Right!*

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Sodexo is proud to partner with your school district to provide nutritious school meals for your children. Our unique approach provides students with a variety of healthy menu choices designed specifically to satisfy their taste preferences. To learn more, visit www.sodexousa.com or call 800-354-7000.

