



Portion Pointers: How Much and How Many?

Estimating appropriate portions for some foods can be tricky.

We've got resources, tips and guidelines to help you explain proper portions – and how many of these portions are recommended daily, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Portion Size Discussions

Some foods naturally lend themselves to portion size discussions – whole pieces of fruit, for example, or a small whole wheat roll. Others, such as mixed dishes, need more explanation,

because they frequently contain partial servings of certain food groups. Here are a few guidelines to help you easily convey these concepts.

Discuss Daily Food Plans

Before getting into a discussion of proper portions for various foods, consider reviewing the goal intakes provided on the ChooseMyPlate.gov website.

- Choose an audience-appropriate example from the Daily Food Plan worksheets available on the website.
- For an “average” example, included in this toolkit is the Daily Food Plan for an 18+ year-old individual who consumes 2,000 calories per day.

Daily Goals:

- Grains: 6 ounces (half whole-grain)
- Vegetables: 2½ cups
- Fruits: 2 cups
- Dairy: 3 cups
- Protein Foods: 5½ ounces

- Amounts for each Daily Food Plan will vary depending on age, gender, and level of physical activity. For Daily Food Plans that represent other calorie levels, visit ChooseMyPlate.gov.
- Use the consumer meal plans provided in this toolkit to demonstrate what a balanced plate for each calorie level looks like at 2,000 calories, with modifications for 1,800 and 1,500 calorie levels.



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Show and Tell Portion Size Information with Food

Referencing the Daily Food Plan worksheet and its portion information, discuss how much of a food “counts” as a serving. Use foods that you’ve

brought along as examples, and provide copies of the Daily Food Plan worksheet for the audience, if desired.

In General What Counts?

Grains

- Any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or other cereal grain counts as part of the Grain Group. Items such as bread, pasta, oatmeal, breakfast cereals, tortillas and grits are examples.
- Consumers are encouraged to consume whole grains for at least half of the recommended amounts.
- 1 ounce equivalent from the Grain Group can be 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal, or ½ cup of cooked rice, cooked pasta, or cooked cereal.

Fruits

- Any fruit or 100% fruit juice counts as part of the Fruit Group. Fruits may be fresh, canned, frozen, dried, and may be whole, cut-up, or pureed.
- 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice, or ½ cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the Fruit Group.

Vegetables

- Any vegetable or 100% vegetable juice counts as part of the Vegetable Group. Vegetables may be raw or cooked; fresh, frozen, canned, or dried/dehydrated; and may be whole, cut-up, or mashed.
- 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the Vegetable Group.

Dairy

- All fluid milk products and foods made from milk are part of the Dairy Group. Choices in this group should be fat-free or low-fat. Foods made from milk that have little to no calcium, such as cream cheese, cream, and butter, are not part of the Dairy Group. Calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage) is also part of the Dairy Group.
- 1 cup of milk, yogurt, soymilk, 1½ ounces of natural cheese, or 2 ounces of processed cheese can be considered as 1 cup from the Dairy Group.

Protein Foods

- All foods made from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds are considered part of the Protein Foods Group. Beans and peas are also part of the Vegetable Group.
- 1 ounce of meat, poultry or fish, ¼ cup cooked beans, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, or ½ ounce of nuts or seeds can be considered as 1 ounce equivalent from the Protein Foods Group.

For more examples on what counts as a cup or ounce equivalent in each food group, visit <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/> and click on the respective food groups.



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Explain How to Handle Mixed Dishes, Such as Frozen Entrées

Show a frozen entrée as an example (choosing one similar to those listed below for ease), and discuss how these amounts fit into the Daily Food Plan recommendations. Explain that frozen prepared meals are pre-portioned and by using the prepared entrée as a guide you can add more of the food groups that may be missing from your “plate.” Emphasize how balancing a plate with additional food rounds out the meal, contributing to the totals used in the Daily Food Plans.

Unsure how much to add? In general consumers should aim to make half of their plate fruits and vegetables. If the frozen entrée is made up of mostly grain and protein, the consumer can easily be guided to add extra fruits and veggies.

Entrée	Grains (oz. eq.)	Vegetables (cups)	Fruits (cups)	Dairy (cups)	Protein Foods (oz. eq.)
Lasagna with meat, 3½”x 3¼” piece (or 1 cup)	1½	½	–	¾	1
Chicken pot pie (8 oz.)	2½	¼	–	–	1½
Tuna noodle casserole (1 cup)	2	–	–	¼	2
Stuffed peppers with meat and rice (1 half pepper)	½	½	–	–	1½
Spaghetti and meatballs (1½ cups)	2½	1	–	¼	1½
Breakfast sandwich (egg, cheese, sausage on English muffin; 1 sandwich)	2	–	–	½	1½
Chili with meat and beans (¾ cup)	–	½	–	–	1½*
Lo mein with shrimp or beef (1 cup)	1½	¾	–	–	1

Source: www.choosemyplate.gov

*In this example we counted beans as a protein; they could also be counted as vegetables

Note: When talking about supplementing an entrée to balance a plate, emphasize that providing exactly the right amounts of foods to coincide with a Daily Food Plan isn’t necessary. Rather, making an appropriate judgment about what food groups are needed to balance a plate is a reasonable goal or starting point. Looking at all the examples above, it is clear that providing foods from at least the Fruit Group would be appropriate to balance the plate.

My Daily Food Plan

Based on the information you provided, this is your daily recommended amount for each food group.



GRAINS
6 ounces



VEGETABLES
2 1/2 cups



FRUITS
2 cups



DAIRY
3 cups



PROTEIN FOODS
5 1/2 ounces

Make half your grains whole

Aim for at least **3 ounces** of whole grains a day

Vary your veggies

Aim for these amounts **each week:**

Dark green veggies
= 1 1/2 cups

Red & orange veggies
= 5 1/2 cups

Beans & peas
= 1 1/2 cups

Starchy veggies
= 5 cups

Other veggies
= 4 cups

Focus on fruits

Eat a variety of fruit

Choose whole or cut-up fruits more often than fruit juice

Get your calcium-rich foods

Drink fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk, for the same amount of calcium and other nutrients as whole milk, but less fat and Calories

Select fat-free or low-fat yogurt and cheese, or try calcium-fortified soy products

Go lean with protein

Twice a week, make seafood the protein on your plate

Vary your protein routine—choose beans, peas, nuts, and seeds more often

Keep meat and poultry portions small and lean

Find your balance between food and physical activity

Be physically active for at least **150 minutes** each week.

Know your limits on fats, sugars, and sodium

Your allowance for oils is **6 teaspoons** a day.

Limit Calories from solid fats and added sugars to **260 Calories** a day.

Reduce sodium intake to less than **2300 mg** a day.

Your results are based on a 2000 Calorie pattern.

Name:

This Calorie level is only an estimate of your needs. Monitor your body weight to see if you need to adjust your Calorie intake.