

Portion Distortion

Master portion control and you'll master your weight-loss goals. BY ALLISON YOUNG

Do you snack in front of the TV? Do you eat till you're stuffed? Do you order the biggest item on the menu? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you could be suffering from portion distortion. "We've lost our ability to recognize a sense of healthy fullness," says Lisa Young, PhD, RD, author of *The Portion Teller Plan: The No-Diet Reality Guide to Eating, Cheating, and Losing Weight Permanently* (Broadway, 2006) and adjunct professor at New York University. Clean eating isn't only about making healthy choices. It's also about controlling your portions, yet many people don't know a serving of chips from a serving of cheese – and over time, those extra calories can add up. Consuming an additional 100 calories a day means packing on 10 extra pounds a year. Yikes! ID your portion downfalls and you'll avoid food traps and unnecessary weight gain – just like that!

Put Your Portion Size Smarts to the Test!

- 1 The portion size of 100% fruit juice is:
a) 1 cup
b) $\frac{3}{4}$ cup
c) $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
Hint: The correct answer is equivalent to about 55 calories of OJ.
- 2 Twenty years ago, a typical bagel weighed in at 140 calories. Today, the average bagel is:
a) 350 calories
b) 310 calories
c) 240 calories
- 3 Adding Subway sides like two chocolate chip cookies, low-fat milk (12 oz) and a bowl of Cream of Potato with Bacon soup adds how many calories to your meal?
a) 340
b) 525
c) 850
- 4 A 1-ounce serving of cheese is about the size of:
a) 2 dice
b) 4 dice
c) A deck of cards
- 5 For an average adult, the USDA recommends $5\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of meat daily. That said, a Triple Whopper from Burger King has how many ounces of beef?
a) 8 ounces
b) 10 ounces
c) 12 ounces
- 6 A serving of breakfast cereal is:
a) $\frac{1}{2}$ cup
b) $\frac{3}{4}$ cup
c) 1 cup
- 7 A serving of margarine is about as big as:
a) The tip of your thumb
b) A tablespoon
c) One lipstick
- 8 A 1-ounce serving of potato chips is usually equal to about how many chips?
a) 15
b) 25
c) 35
- 9 A single serving of cooked pasta or rice is about as big as:
a) A tennis ball
b) A scoop of ice cream
c) A golf ball
- 10 A large vanilla cone from Dairy Queen contains how many servings of ice cream:
a) 1 serving
b) 2 servings
c) 3 servings
- 11 One serving of peanut butter is:
a) 1 tablespoon
b) 2 tablespoons
c) 4 tablespoons
Hint: It's equivalent to just under 200 calories.
- 12 A 3-ounce serving of chicken is about the size of:
a) A deck of cards
b) A teacup
c) A fist

SCORING

To tabulate your score, add up the corresponding points for each of your answers (a, b or c) using the scoring key below.

1. a 1 b 2 c 3
2. a 3 b 2 c 1
3. a 1 b 2 c 3
4. a 2 b 3 c 1
5. a 1 b 2 c 3
6. a 3 b 3 c 3
7. a 3 b 2 c 1
8. a 3 b 2 c 1
9. a 1 b 3 c 2
10. a 1 b 2 c 3
11. a 2 b 3 c 1
12. a 3 b 2 c 1

Your total = _____

14 to 21 points PORTION ROOKIE

OK, so you're not master of your portion domain, but at least you're reading this article. Make sure to read nutrition labels carefully, cut down on large restaurant portions and keep a food journal so you know exactly how much you're eating.

22 to 29 points PORTION PUPIL

You're halfway there, but you still have a lot to learn. Rather than eating mindlessly at your desk or in front of the TV, slow down and savor your food. Try to eat only when you're hungry and stop when you're full. It's that simple.

30 points or more PORTION PRO

Nice job, portion diva! Your score is through the roof. But remember, knowing is only half the battle. Don't just be smart – eat smart.

Here's an explanation for each quiz question (if you are a Portion Rookie or Portion Pupil, we suggest you read on).



TIP: *Don't drink your calories. Instead of free refills of sweet beverages, quench your thirst with water.*

ONE "Most people don't know how many calories are in juice," says Esther Blum, RD, a holistic nutritionist and author of *Eat, Drink, and Be Gorgeous: A Nutritionist's Guide to Living Well While Living It Up* (Chronicle Books, 2007). In fact, a ½ cup of orange juice, the recommended serving, has more calories than the same amount of Coca-Cola. Instead of guzzling straight OJ, mix juice with water or seltzer. That way, you'll still get vitamins without the extra calories. For an antioxidant-rich drink, Blum recommends mixing 2 ounces of pomegranate juice with 6 ounces of seltzer – and it's only 40 calories a glass!



TWO According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, a typical bagel has ballooned from 3 inches in diameter to 6, and the calories have jumped from 140 to 350. "I think the reason carbs have gotten such a bad name is because bagels and muffins have supersized," says Young. "People think, 'It's only one, I can't gain weight,' but that 'only one' mentality can add up over time."



THREE Two Subway cookies (420 calories) plus milk (190 calories) and soup (240 calories) equals 850 calories – that's without the sub! Our recent Cornell University studies showed that not only do people underestimate the caloric content of main dishes by 35 percent at fast-food joints perceived as healthy, but they're also more likely to choose high-calorie sides, drinks and desserts. Study author Brian Wansink, PhD, author of *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think* (Bantam, 2006) and director of the Cornell Food and Brand Lab, says people underestimate 150 to 400 calories a meal. "If you're eating at what you believe is a healthy restaurant, you're going to be more accurate at estimating your calories if you double your best guess," says Wansink.

TIP: *When eating out, don't estimate the calories of the total meal. Look at each individual item and you'll be much more accurate, says Wansink.*

FIVE A Triple Whopper with cheese from BK has a whopping 12 ounces of beef, more than twice the recommended serving size. And that's not the only super-sized number. The triple-threat burger contains 1,230 calories, 82 grams of total fat (32 grams of saturated fat) and 1,590 milligrams of sodium. For a healthy adult, most experts recommend no more than 1,500 to 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day. Add a large order of fries to the mix (820 milligrams of sodium) and you're over the daily dose.



FOUR Stack 4 dice and you have the equivalent of a 1-ounce serving of cheese. Switch to low-fat cheddar and you cut the calories by more than half (only 49 calories). "When eating cheese, you really have to be mindful," says Young, who suggests eating cheese as a snack or side dish rather than adding it to a sandwich or salad. That way, you get to really savor it.





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SIX The serving size of cereal varies. Puffed-up varieties, like Cheerios and Kellogg's Special K, have 1 cup per serving (about the size of your fist). Calorie-dense cereals, such as oatmeal, scale back to ½ cup per serving (about the size of a scoop of ice cream). According to a study reported in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, adults eat about twice the serving size of cereal, so before you bust open the box, be sure to check labels. And don't stock up on sugary cereals just because they're on sale. Research shows that the more variety you have, the more you eat," says Young.



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SEVEN When it comes to oil, margarine and butter, less is more. A single serving is 1 teaspoon or the tip of your thumb. It's easy to get carried away with extra butter or margarine, especially when it melts into your baked potato, but just 1 tablespoon has 100 calories and 11 grams of fat. As for salad dressings, be sure to order them on the side. Salad dressing is one of the major contributors of fat to a woman's diet," says Young, who adds that you can easily get a ¼ cup of dressing with your take-out salad.

EIGHT A serving of potato chips is only about 15 measly chips. To prevent mindless munching, don't eat directly from the bag or in front of the TV (recipe for disaster). Put them in a small bowl – that way, you won't be tempted to overindulge. "You need to eat without distractions," says Blum, meaning no eating in front of your computer or while on the phone. They enable you to completely check out, which can increase calories." To cut down on fat and calories, go for the baked option. Barbecue Baked Lay's chips have 120 calories and 3 grams of fat per serving, compared to 150 calories and 10 grams of fat for regular chips.

TIP: *Snack wisely. Buy single serving-sized bags of cookies, crackers and chips.*



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NINE A ½ cup of cooked pasta or rice – about the size of a scoop of ice cream – weighs in between 90 and 120 calories. "The eye and brain are trained to finish whatever is on the plate, so if you start with a small portion size on a small plate, you get to finish all your food without overdoing the calories," says Blum. When eating out, Young suggests sharing entrées or ordering appetizer portions of pasta. "Go for the red sauce over the cream sauce and you'll save on calories," she adds.

TIP: *Erase the "more is better" mentality. "You're getting better bang for your health buck if you eat less," says Young.*

TEN A large DQ cone has more than 1 cup of ice cream. Given that a serving is a ½ cup (about an ice cream scoop's worth), that's two servings – and 420 calories, not including the cone! Keep in mind that ice cream calories vary depending on the flavor and brand. Häagen-Dazs Chocolate Peanut Butter flavor has 360 calories per ½ cup, while Breyers All Natural Chocolate only has 140 calories.

TIP: *Eat larger portions of fruits and vegetables balanced out with smaller portions of less healthy foods, suggests Young.*



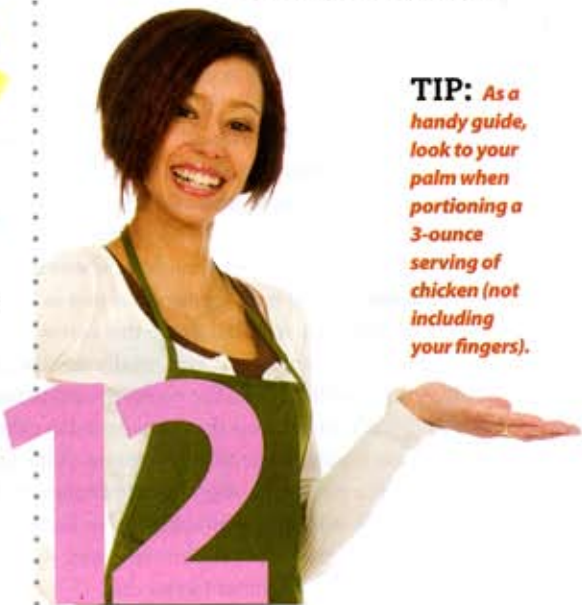
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TIP: *Slow down. "It takes the body 20 minutes to even begin to register fullness," says Blum. "When you slow down and really savor the flavor, you can often eat less and still feel satisfied."*



ELEVEN The official serving size of peanut butter is 2 tablespoons – or about the size of a Ping-Pong ball. Rather than just slathering it on, use an old-fashioned measuring spoon if you want to be more exact, suggests Blum. Opt for all-natural varieties to avoid extra salt, sweeteners and hydrogenated oils.



TIP: *As a handy guide, look to your palm when portioning a 3-ounce serving of chicken (not including your fingers).*

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TIP: *Don't starve or stuff yourself. "Eat when you're hungry and stop when you're full," suggests Blum.*

TWELVE A 3-ounce serving of chicken is about the size of a deck of cards (or the palm of your hand). To give yourself a visual, Blum suggests weighing meat on a food scale. "We are so trained to eat large portions that we don't even know what a real portion size looks like anymore," says Blum, who suggests trying out a scale for a week to help retrain your brain. To keep the calorie and fat content down, select lean meats, trim away any excess fat, remove skin from poultry, and broil or roast instead of frying. ☺