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More is Better...Right?

By Karen Massey, Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent, Routt County Extension

Portion sizes keep getting bigger and bigger. You can see this trend toward larger servings in restaurants, grocery stores and even our own homes.

Why are food and beverage portion sizes growing? Restaurant owners and food manufacturers know that consumers want value. This usually means volume --the more food, the better the deal. So, is it a good "value" when you add 400 calories to your meal by super-sizing it for only 50 cents? The answer is a resounding "No." Just 100 extra calories per day can lead to a weight gain of 10 pounds per year!



Research shows that larger portion sizes encourage people to eat and drink more. These extra calories can lead to weight gain. Additionally, these larger servings distort our view of what a normal portion size should look like. Throughout the past 20 years, we have become used to larger portions. During that time, there has been a dramatic increase in childhood and adult obesity in the United States. Larger portion sizes aren't the only reason, but certainly contribute to this alarming trend.

Just as portion sizes have increased over the past 20 years, so has the frequency of eating out. Eating out used to be considered a special treat. Large restaurant dinners would be balanced with smaller dinners at home. Now, busy families eat an increasing number of their meals away from home. As the number of meals eaten away from home increases, the amount of food eaten also increases.

An estimated 17 percent of US children ages 2-19 are obese. Obese children are at higher risk for developing high blood pressure, high cholesterol and Type 2 diabetes than other children. 2007-2009 NHANES, as reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, March 2010.

Tips for Success:

- Prepare and eat more of your meals at home. We tend to eat larger portions when we eat out.
- When eating out, consider splitting meals with other family members. Or, take half of your meals home to eat at another meal.
- Replace your large plates and bowls with smaller dishes so that your home portions are more realistic.
- Teach children what a serving size is by using measuring spoons and measuring cups to serve food instead of traditional serving spoons. With time, everyone will learn what a standard serving size looks like.
- Beware of mindless eating while watching TV. Turn off the television during meal-time and focus on enjoying family time together.

- Eat more fruits and vegetables and you can worry less about large portion sizes. Fruits and vegetables take up lots of space on your plate without adding many calories.

Adult Serving Sizes of Commonly Eaten Foods

Pasta	½ cup, or the size of ½ baseball
Bread	1 slice
Fruit, whole	1 whole piece, i.e. banana, apple, orange
Fruit, canned	½ cup
Vegetable, cooked	½ cup
Meat, poultry, fish	3 oz., about the size of a deck of cards

Egg	1 egg
Milk, yogurt	8 oz. or 1 cup
Butter, margarine	1 tablespoon
Nuts	1-2 oz., about one med. handful
Cheese	1 oz., the size of 2 dice

Toddler serving sizes are about ¼ of an adult size. Preschool serving sizes are about 1/3 of an adult size. Each child's hunger level is different and may change from day to day, so let children ask for more if they are hungry.

Let's Talk:

Encourage your child's natural ability to "listen" to their body cues and stop eating when they are full. Offer your child an assortment of healthy foods to taste and talk about the importance of learning to eat a variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables. Let your child decide how much to eat from a mixture of healthy foods. If he or she is still hungry, they can ask for more. Enjoy mealtime with your child and be patient as they develop their eating habits.

Recipe for Health:

Oriental Peanut Butter Pasta *Children enjoy selecting their favorite toppings for the pasta*

Ingredients:

8 oz. Spaghetti, cooked as directed

Sauce

¼ cup peanut butter, creamy

1/3 cup chicken broth, hot

3 T soy sauce

2 T red wine vinegar

1 T canola oil

1 T sugar

2 cloves garlic, minced

Toppings

1 cup carrots, shredded

¼ cup green onion, sliced

1 cup grated or diced zucchini or cucumber

½ cup sliced mushrooms

1 cup chicken, cooked and shredded



1. In a blender, combine the peanut butter, broth, soy sauce, vinegar, oil, sugar and garlic. Blend until smooth.
2. Toss the cooked pasta with the sauce.
3. Serve the pasta and allow each person to top it with the vegetables and chicken. *Serves approx. 4*