

Changing Portion Size to Balance Your Diet

Does reducing portion size help you to lose weight?

It is not uncommon for people to think that if you're trying to lose weight, you simply need to eat less food and although this concept is basically the same as reducing portion size, what we hope to show you is while reducing the serving size of some foods is important, the type of foods you are eating is more important.

Would you like to upsize that?

A good example of how serving size can influence the total amount of energy consumed is if you were to look at the difference between a standard take away meals from a fast food chain and compare it with the upsized version. For educational purposes we will use meals that you could buy from McDonalds.

Portion Size	French Fries	Coke
Small	225 Cal (1070Kj)	101 Cal (428 kJ)
Medium	398 Cal (1540Kj)	148 Cal (612 kJ)
Large	453 Cal (1900Kj)	224 Cal (937 kJ)

*Figures adopted from the Australian McDonalds website 2007.

As can be seen in the table above, if you increase the portion size of the food consumed, you can also significantly increase the amount of energy. Almost double for the large vs small serves.

Should I reduce portion size if I'm trying to lose weight?

Given that the portion size can impact on the total amount of energy consumed, when trying to lose weight it makes sense to be mindful of how much food you are actually eating. Portion size on its own isn't the answer. If combined with energy density and frequency then you are on the right track.

How do I reduce my portion sizes?

It's not necessarily the total portion size we want to reduce unless you are over and above a normal meal. If you plate is overloaded or you need a few then you need to reduce your portion size

What more important is that you modify your portion sizes. For example your plate could be full of pasta and a bolognaise sauce with a side of garlic bread. Reduce the portion size of these and increase portion sizes of salads or veggies to half of your plate and you can almost half the energy content of your meal but still be eating the same amount of food.

The theory behind these modifications is that we have tried to increase the portion of fibre (through the consumption of fruits, vegetable, legumes beans etc) to help satisfy your hunger and prolong satiety (feeling of fullness), whilst also reducing the energy density. This variation will ultimately reduce the total amount of energy consumed throughout the day, whilst also helping to satisfy your hunger.

Another popular trend in the weight loss community is to reduce portion size through the use of meal replacements. Currently there is a lot of growing evidence to support the use of meal replacements in assisting weight loss, however, it is important to remember that they are most effective when used in conjunction with a lifestyle education and modification program, such as those found in the lifestyle medicine website.

For more information on diet and nutrition or meal replacements check the Patient Information section at www.lifestylemedicine.net.au OR email: info@lifestylemedicine.net.au