



November 1, 2003

Dear Colleague:

What better month to discuss the portion distortion on American plates than November – when we celebrate our national day of overeating, AKA Thanksgiving! This month's **Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere** packet sprinkles common-sense advice into on-the-go lives with **healthy options for travel and restaurants**. We offer timely tips on **downsizing serving sizes and upgrading activity levels** – two keys to maintaining a healthy weight at home and on the road.

The fact that American serving sizes have increased dramatically is no secret. The bottom line for America's weight problems may not be so much **what** we eat, but **how much** we eat – especially when we're eating one of our many meals away from home. This is one reason that the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Obesity Committee is beginning to discuss options for nutrition labeling in restaurants – with the food industry, concerned health providers and consumer advocates.

Here is some food for thought about US food portions and their effect on health.

- **From Wallet to Waistline (www.aicr.org/press/NANAREport.pdf)**
The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA) issued this June 2002 report ~ focusing on the calorie and fat costs of “upgrading to larger portion sizes of single-serve foods at fast-food restaurants, convenience stores, and other retail food establishments.”
- **Journal of the American Medical Association (January 2003; 289:450-453)**
Review of USDA national survey data shows that calories per serving increased in all food categories (except pizza) for food eaten both inside and outside the home. The greatest increases were seen in fast food establishments and in the home.
- **American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (May 2003; 77:1164-1170)**
Study from the Children's Nutrition Research Center (CNRC) in Houston, Texas, showed that preschool children took bigger bites and ate more calories when served super-sized portions of their favorite foods. The same children ate less when offered smaller portions.
- **Psychological Science (Rozin, Kabnick and Pete in September 2003)**
Comparison of serving sizes in US and France suggests that the French ‘paradox’ (less heart disease and lower weights) may be due, at least in part, to smaller food portions. The mean weights of US restaurant portions were 25 percent larger than those in France.

As always, we welcome feedback ~ so, please let us know what you think.

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**Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere: Healthy Restaurant Options
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Healthy Families 2003: How to right-size food portions (11th in a series of 12)

Did you grow up in a home with the ‘Clean Plate Club’? Are you still carrying a membership card? Finishing everything on your plate can be a serious problem when eating out these days – a serious problem for your waistline and for your health.

“There has been a dramatic increase in food serving sizes over the past 20 years,” says Nonie Woolf, MPH, RD (registered dietitian), with Indian Health Service in Browning. “Fast food chains are not the only place that portions have been super-sized. Restaurants meals, supermarket packages, snack foods and even cookbook recipes are all bigger than they used to be – sometimes a lot bigger.”

The real problem is not that portions are larger; the problem is that we tend to ‘lick the platter clean.’ A recent study showed that even preschool children take bigger bites and eat more calories when served larger portions of their favorite foods. In this study, smaller portions also meant fewer calories.

“People know that portions are larger, but they are often surprised to find out how many calories or servings they are actually getting in fast food drive-thrus and family restaurants,” says Ms. Woolf. A super-sized fast food combo meal can have 1,500 calories or more. A spaghetti dinner at a pasta chain can have as many as 10 grain servings (4 cups of pasta and 2 breadsticks) in a single meal.

There are many ways to downsize your meals, according to Woolf. “At fast food chains, your best bet is to ‘just say no’ – no to super-size fries and drinks, no to combo meals, and no to so-called value meals. At any restaurant, you can cut costs and cut calories at the same time – by sharing menu items. Or you can savor your food twice: Eat half in the restaurant and take half home for another meal.”

Eat Right Montana, a statewide coalition promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles, urges all Montanans to right-size their meals and snacks – at restaurants, convenience stores and home.

“When you eat less, you can enjoy it more,” says Woolf. “The potential benefits are definite biggies – no more overstuffed feelings, a healthy weight, better blood sugars and lower blood pressure.

ATTACHED: *Downsize Serving Sizes and Upgrade Your Activity Levels*

Ten Easy Ways to Downsize Serving Sizes

Everywhere you eat these days, food portions are bigger than they used to be. In some cases, they are a lot bigger – like double what they were just a few years ago. Fast food meals, quick-serve eateries, elegant restaurants, supermarkets and even cookbooks, they all serve larger portions and contribute to the expanding waistlines of Americans. Experts agree that right-sizing your food portions is one of the easiest ways to reach and maintain a healthy weight – at any age. Here are ten simple ways to change **how much** you eat – without giving up any of your favorite foods:

1. **Think before you order:** Planning ahead is always smart. Think about how hungry you actually are. Think about sharing with a friend. Think about taking half home.
2. **Just say no:** Fast food “value” meals may sound like a good deal, but they serve up more calories, fat and sugar than you need. So, say “no thanks” to the combo offers.
3. **Swap super-size for smart size:** Order a regular burger, fries and soft drink – and you can enjoy half the calories of the super/biggie/mega-size meal.
4. **Share a biggie size item:** There is a smart way to make mega-portions work for your health (and wallet) – share! Split an order of fries to cut calories and save money.
5. **Save calories with a kiddie meal:** Here is another simple way to save money and improve drive-thru nutrition (plus you might get a cool toy, too!)
6. **Order an appetizer as an entrée:** Appetizer portions are often exactly the right size – and a lot less expensive than a full meal in fancier restaurants.
7. **Savor an entrée twice as much:** Eat half your dinner in the restaurant – and take half home for breakfast or lunch tomorrow. This cuts calories and gives you another meal.
8. **Share a dessert:** Any menu item can be shared – entrées, salads, sandwiches – and, best of all, desserts. With a shared sweet, you can eat your cake – and eat healthy too.
9. **Switch to power beverages:** A simple switch to low-fat milk or water can cut calories quickly. If you choose a soft drink, go with the small – plus a large ice water.
10. **Enjoy new healthful options:** Many chains are responding to consumer demand with new options – like combo meals featuring sandwiches, side salads and bottled water.



**Celebrating
Healthy
Families 2003**

Ten Fun Ways to Upgrade Activity Levels

Do you travel for business or pleasure? Find it hard to locate a gym? Hate those cramped hotel fitness centers? Fortunately, it's easy to fit fitness in – anytime, anywhere. All you need is a little creativity and a commitment to daily physical activity. Just imagine the benefits – less stress during the day, improved sleep at night, more energy for everything and a healthier future. There is no better way to invest your time!

- 1. Put activity at the top of your to-do list:** No one has enough time for everything. Make fitness one of your priorities – and you'll have more energy for everything else.
- 2. Plan activity in your schedule:** Put fitness on your calendar. It's just as important as (or more important than) those lunches, dinners, meetings and phone calls.
- 3. Wear (or carry) comfortable shoes:** With the right shoes, you can take advantage of every opportunity to be more active – like every chance to walk up the stairs.
- 4. Walk to your appointments:** Using your legs for transportation is one of the easiest ways to fit fitness into every day. Park in a central location and walk back and forth.
- 5. Wait by walking rather than sitting:** We do lots of waiting – and sitting. Instead of sitting, walk around the building, walk around the block or walk around the airport.
- 6. Stand up and stretch:** Stretching is an important part of fitness (along with aerobics, balance and strength training). It's as easy as standing up and reaching for the sky.
- 7. Break up your day with fitness:** Ten minutes is all it takes! Just three 10-minute fitness breaks can provide big health benefits – for a total of 30 minutes per day.
- 8. Sit and be fit:** Do you spend hours sitting at a desk, sitting in the car or sitting on a plane? No sweat! Strengthen your abs by tightening them against the chair back.
- 9. Fidget and squirm:** Research actually shows that fidgeting burns calories. So, get in the habit of wiggling, squirming and moving around wherever you are.
- 10. Explore the neighborhood:** When you are in some place new, walk or bike around the area (check safety first). You can get your bearings – and get fit at the same time.



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Healthy Families 2003

Fit and Healthy, Anytime, Anywhere:

Taking charge of your eating and your life

www.montanadieteticassociation.org/promo.html

January 2003

- Nutrition and Physical Activity, ANYTIME, ANYWHERE!!

February 2003

- Healthy options in the morning

March 2003

- Healthy options at noon

April 2003

- Healthy options in the evening

May 2003

- Healthy options throughout the day

June 2003

- Healthy options at work

July 2003

- Healthy options on the road

August 2003

- Healthy options while camping

September 2003

- Healthy options at school

October 2003

- Healthy options for the backcountry

November 2003

- Healthy options in restaurants

December 2003

- Healthy options at celebrations



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