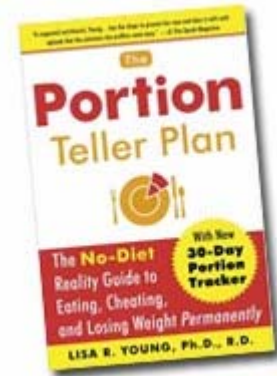# Lose Weight with "The Portion Teller"

By Kim Droze, Special to **LifeScript**

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*Did you know that eating one 5-ounce bagel is the caloric equivalent of 5 slices of bread? Or that a single 6.5-ounce bran muffin is equal in calories to 52 animal crackers, while one 18-ounce steak equals 18 eggs? A single serving of anything might seem harmless. But when those portions are super-sized they can pack on the pounds. Portion distortion is a key culprit in the obesity epidemic sweeping this country, according to nutritionist and author **Dr. Lisa Young**. Find out how to fight back...*

Bigger isn't better. In fact, super-sized food is making people dangerously fat. An estimated 68.5% of U.S. adults are overweight thanks, in part, to ever-growing portions of our beloved junk foods.

In 1960, a bottle of Coke was just 6.5 ounces and a McDonald's hamburger weighed a mere 1.5 ounces. By 2000, that same soda had tripled, to 20 ounces, while the burger ballooned to over five-times its previous size, to eight ounces.

The Portion Problem

Gargantuan helpings are fueling America's weight problem, says **Dr. Lisa Young,** a nutritionist with more than 20 years of experience counseling people on weight loss. Her new book, ***The Portion Teller Plan*** (2006, Morgan Road Books), shows how to trim your waistline by trimming your intake. Her motto: less food equals less calories.

"At the end of the day, if you want to lose weight, it's about calories," she tells LifeScript.

It's not about carbs, fat or protein, **Young** explains. "It's about eating fewer calories and expending more calories."

When people are presented with more food, they eat more calories. "They're consuming excess calories and don't know why they're gaining weight," she says. What they're eating has "doubled in size."

The True Measure of Success

Sadly, most people have no clue how much they're really eating. They don't know that on today's scale, one muffin, bagel or order of pasta can easily add up to an entire day's worth of grains. They're not aware that 16 ounces of orange juice equals 6 tangerines.

The first step to lightening up is learning portion control, says **Young**. One surefire way: weigh your portions on a food scale and compare it to the recommended serving size. Do this until you can recognize true serving sizes by sight.

Another rule of thumb: Compare portion sizes to common household items. **Young** provides a quick guide to get you started:

- 3 ounces of meat, poultry or fish = deck of cards
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter = one un-shelled walnut
- 2 tablespoons of salad dressing = shot glass
- 1 teaspoon of olive oil = standard cap size on a 16-ounce water bottle
- 1 teaspoon of butter = standard postage stamp
- 1 cup cold cereal = baseball
- ½ cup rice or pasta = ½ baseball
- 1 ounce hard cheese = 4 dice
- 1 potato = computer mouse
- 1 piece of fruit = baseball

Helping Hands
Not savvy at visualization techniques? Not everyone keeps four dice, a postage stamp and a shot glass on-hand for every meal. Luckily, you can also use your hands to gauge portion sizes.

"If your hand is smaller than average, [your body is] probably smaller than average and needs less food," **Young** says.

Here's a quick rundown for hands-on portion control:

- 3 ounces of meat, fish or poultry = palm of your hand
- ¼ cup mixed nuts or granola = 1 layer on your palm
- 1 cup veggies or berries = tight fist
- 1 cup popcorn or cereal flakes = 2 cupped hands
- ½ cup rice or pasta = rounded handful
- ½ teaspoon oil or butter = 1 fingertip

Not All Portions are Created Equal
Rather than focus on deprivation or cutting out entire food groups, the *Portion Teller Plan* advocates eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. You'll fill up faster and feel more satisfied without going overboard on calories.

"If you want a cookie, have a cookie. But have it with a bowl of berries and you're less likely to feel deprived."
Get your own copy of *The Portion Teller's Diet*.