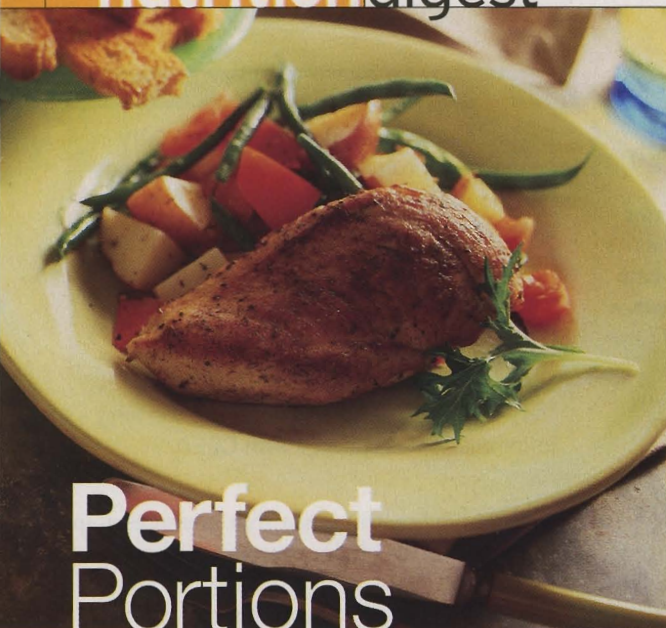


nutrition digest



Perfect Portions

Why it's all about the amount!

by Elizabeth Somer, M.A., R.D.

You've cut back on carbs, added more protein or switched to fat-free food. But the reason you can't drop those extra pounds could be how much—not just what—you're eating. "People are focused on fat or carbs, but blind to their huge portions of calorie-dense foods," says Barbara Rolls, Ph.D., of the Pennsylvania State University in University Park and author of *The Volumetrics Eating Plan*.

Portions have ballooned tenfold in the past few decades. A typical cookie today is eight times bigger, a serving of pasta almost six times larger, muffins and bagels three times their former size.

"It's no wonder people have totally lost track of


what a real portion should look like," declares Lisa Young, R.D., adjunct professor of nutrition and food studies at New York University and author of *The Portion Teller*. Those whopping portions mean more calories. Just a few examples:

- Cinnabon's Caramel Pecanbon supplies 900 calories, more than 10 teaspoons fat and two thirds of the day's saturated fat allotment.
- Baja Fresh's Bean and Cheese Chicken Burrito contains 1,120 calories, 42 grams of fat and a day's worth of saturated fat.
- Baskin Robbins' large Vanilla Shake supplies 1,070 calories and 160 percent of your day's total sat-fat allotment.

The explosion in portion size also accounts for why we now average several

hundred more calories a day than we did 20 years ago. "It's not large portions of everything, only the calorie-packed items high in fat, sugar and refined grains, that cause problems," adds Rolls.

So feel free to fill your plate with fresh vegetables, fruits, salads, legumes and whole grains. Our chart on the right will help you tell a portion from a platter.

FOOD	SERVING SIZE	TRY FOR SIZE OF
Pasta, cereal, canned fruit, cooked vegetables, cooked rice	½ cup 	A tennis ball
Meat, chicken, fish	3 ounces	A deck of cards
Muffin, bagel, croissant	2 ounces	A doorknob
Cheese	1½ ounces	A 9-volt battery
Peanut butter	2 tablespoons	A Ping-Pong ball
Butter, margarine, fats, oils	1 teaspoon	A domino

Cranberry Power!

Cranberry juice can help prevent urinary tract infections, but will dried cranberries do the same? According to a study at Harvard Medical School, the answer may be yes. Researchers collected urine samples from women with bladder infections and compared them to samples taken after the women had consumed one and a half ounces of raisins or dried cranberries. The scientists then tested bacteria in the samples for their ability to adhere to the urinary tract. They found that cranberries, but not raisins, cut adherence up to 50 percent. Researchers conclude that even one serving of dried cranberries can help reduce



About the Author

Elizabeth Somer, M.A., R.D., is author of *The 10 Habits That Mess Up a Woman's Diet* and editor-in-chief of *Nutrition Alert*, a newsletter summarizing nutrition research. She appears frequently on television, including NBC's *Today*.

bacteria's ability to stick to and colonize the urinary tract, thus potentially aiding in the prevention of bladder infections.

Vitamin Corner: Vitamin B₆

What is it? Also called pyridoxine, pyridoxal or pyridoxamine, this water-soluble B vitamin functions in the building and maintenance of the body's proteins and cell growth.

Why do we need it?

For building red blood cells, neurotransmitters such as serotonin, immune cells such as white blood cells and hormones such as insulin. This B vitamin also helps lower levels of

homocysteine, an amino acid that may contribute to heart disease.

How much? Until age 50, adults need 1.3 mg daily; at 51 and up, men need 1.7 mg and women, 1.5 mg. Requirements increase to 1.9 to 2 mg during pregnancy and lactation. The upper limit for safety is 100 mg a day. Too much can cause nerve damage.

Best sources? Meat, poultry, fish, baked potatoes, bananas, legumes, whole grains and fortified cereal.

i For the scoop on how the right kinds of foods can help sharpen your mind, protect your heart and vision, and cut your cancer risk, visit HealthyUpdates.com/h0306

It's Lovely

Men who consume a Mediterranean-style diet rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, walnuts and olive oil may have a better chance of staying sexually active. In a study at Italy's University of Naples, overweight men with high blood pressure, cholesterol and insulin, as well as erectile dysfunction, ate a typical American diet or a Mediterranean diet. After two years, the men on the Mediterranean diet showed improvement in heart-disease risk factors and erectile function. Those on an American diet continued to perform poorly in the bedroom. ■

