

Food Fact Sheet: Portion sizes

It is important to be aware of portion sizes as too much or too little of any type of food can increase our risk of health problems.

This is because the body may be getting too much or too little of what it needs to stay healthy. This Food Fact Sheet will provide an overview of recommended portion sizes of typical foods. As every person is different, the recommended number of portions for each food will vary, but this sheet provides a good place to get you started.

Carbohydrates – what is a portion?

| |
|------------------------------------|
| What is a portion |
| 1 medium slice of bread |
| Pasta (boiled) 2-3 tablespoons |
| Rice (boiled) 2-3 tablespoons |
| 2 egg sized new potatoes (boiled) |
| 1 medium baked potato (with skin)* |
| Breakfast cereal: 3 tablespoons |
| Porridge oats: 3 tablespoons |

* Potatoes do not contribute to one of your 5 a day, however sweet potatoes, parsnips, swedes and turnips do.

TOP TIP: Choose wholegrains or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar. For more information, see the BDA Food Factsheet on 'Wholegrains'. Be mindful that the carbohydrate portions provided contain different amounts of carbohydrate and calories.

Dairy – what is a portion?

| Type of dairy food | Portion size in grams or millilitres (ml) | What does this look like? |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Milk | 200ml (1/3 pint) | 1 glass |
| Calcium fortified soya alternatives | 200ml (1/3 pint) | 1 glass |
| Yoghurt | 125g | 1 standard pot/ 3 tbsp |
| Cheese (hard) | 30g | A matchbox size piece |

TOP TIP: Try to always choose lower fat and lower sugar options where possible.

Protein – what is a portion?

| Animal Protein | Amount in grams (g) | What does this look like? |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Cooked meat (beef/pork/ lamb/mince/chicken/turkey) | 60g-90g | A deck of cards |
| Cooked white fish (cod or plaice) or canned fish | 140g | Palm of hand |
| Cooked oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines) | 140g | Palm of hand |
| 2 eggs | 120g | |

| Plant Protein | Amount in grams (g) |
|---|---------------------|
| 4 tablespoons of baked beans | 150g |
| 4 tablespoons of beans (kidney beans/butterbeans/ black eyed beans) | 150g |
| 4 tablespoons of pulses (lentils/chickpeas) | 150g |

| | |
|---|------|
| 4 tablespoons of soya/ tofu, vegetable based meat alternative | 100g |
| 1 tablespoon/handful of nuts or peanut butter | 30 |

TOP TIP: Eat more beans and pulses, and two portions of sustainably sourced fish per week, one of which is oily. Eat less red and processed meat.

Fruit and vegetables – what is a portion?

| What is a portion | Amount in grams (g) |
|--|---------------------|
| 1 apple/pear/orange/banana | 80g |
| A handful (10-12) grapes/ berries | 80g |
| 2 plums/apricots/kiwis/ satsumas | 80g |
| 1 small handful/ 1 tablespoon of dried fruit (eg. raisins or sultanas) | 30g |
| 3 heaped tablespoons of peas/carrots/sweetcorn/mixed vegetables | 80g |
| 1/2 pepper/1 medium tomato/ 1 medium parsnip | 80g |

TOP TIP: Eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day.

Oils and spreads – what is a portion?

| Type of oil/spread | Amount in grams (g) |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 teaspoon of butter or spread | 5g |
| 1 teaspoon of oil | 3g |

TOP TIP: Keep to a minimum/small amounts of oils and spreads and measure out. Opt for unsaturated fats.

Mixing food types and portions

People will often have more than one portion of one food type at each meal.

Based on the portion sizes above:

- a sandwich with 2 slices of bread with 2 teaspoons of butter (1 on each slice) would be 2 portions of carbohydrates and 2 portions of fats
- a meal including meat or fish plus beans or pulses would be 2 portions of protein
- a meal containing broccoli and carrots would be 2 portions of vegetables.



The Eatwell Guide (above) shows how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet. You can find more information about the guide at www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx