



**Researcher Documents Growth of U.S. Portions -
and U.S. Waistlines**

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A recent flurry of scientific research on U.S. portion sizes has transformed two previously unconfirmed beliefs into hard scientific facts: U.S. portion sizes have never been bigger, and bigger portions encourage overeating - by as much as 56 percent.

Speaking at a press conference at the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) International Research Conference, Dr. Barbara Rolls of the Pennsylvania State University explained how emerging science is allowing scientists to definitively answer lingering questions about the role of portion size in the obesity epidemic. She outlined the tools that researchers now use to track the growth of portion size in the United States and to pinpoint the precise degree by which these portions induce overeating.

AICR was one of the first organizations to raise awareness about portion sizes and in 2000, they contacted colleagues in Poland, France and Mexico and asked them to measure the size and weight of foods indigenous to those cultures: the bagel, the croissant and the quesadilla. AICR experts then compared those measurements to versions of these foods found in U.S. markets, and found that the American versions had ballooned in size, weight and calorie content.

New Research Demonstrates Growth of Portions

A study published last year in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* (JADA) showed that the portion sizes of commercially available foods and beverages have increased. In 1955, a single order of French fries weighed in at **2.4 ounces**. Today,

an average single serving is **7.1 ounces** - a nearly **200 percent increase**. Another study in *JADA* noted a dramatic growth in portions of pasta, soft drinks, cereal, beer, coffee and others in just a 5 years' time.

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that individual portions of snacks, soft drinks, hamburgers, French fries and Mexican food have increased significantly over the past 20 years - both in and out of the home.

New Research Demonstrates that Bigger Portions Increase Consumption

In a study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, Dr. Rolls and her colleagues tested how subjects responded to 4 different portions of macaroni and cheese served on different days. Participants consumed **30 percent more calories** on days when they were served the largest portion. Fewer than half of the respondents noticed that there were differences in the portions they were served.

In a study published in *Appetite*, subjects ate a mid-afternoon snack consisting of differently sized bags of potato chips (170 grams vs. 85 grams). The larger bag induced **women to consume 18 percent more calories**, and **men to consume 37 percent more**. When dinner was served several hours later, subjects **did not adjust their intakes to compensate** for the extra calories.

A study published in the *Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Journal*, suggests that portion size can induce sustained overeating over longer periods of time. Researchers increased the portions of all foods eaten by subjects over 2 days' time. When portions were 50 percent larger than baseline, **calorie intake increased by 16 percent**. When they were 100 percent larger, **calorie intake increased by 26 percent**.

Dr. Rolls stressed that along with increased portion size, foods **high in calories and**

fat play a central role in the American obesity epidemic. "Conversely, large portions of foods **low** in calories and fat such as vegetables, fruits and broth-based soups can aid weight management by providing satisfying portions with fewer calories."

For more information on controlling portion sizes, contact your local Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) or Dietitian.

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