



## **Trading Places**

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If you can't figure out how to cut down calorie consumption, or if you're having trouble getting all the fruits and vegetables you know your body needs, the answer may be right in front of you. Look at what's on your plate: any time you see fruit or vegetables in tiny, garnish-like amounts (or absent completely), this is an opportunity to trade some food on your plate for more fruits or vegetables. In the process, you'll probably cut calories, too.

Simple trades in portions solve a lot of problems. For example, although the serving size posted on a box of cereal is often one cup, many people find that, if they actually measure their usual portion, it's close to two cups, or 180 to 200 calories more than they thought they consumed. If they would eat just one cup of cereal and filled the rest of the bowl with sliced fruit, they'd be just as full and would also have consumed about 100 fewer calories. And they would be starting the day with the fruit's fiber and nutrients that are so important to good health.

Pasta salad is another great place to make a switch. Most versions contain 90 percent pasta. A little chopped celery, carrot, or pepper is added for color and crunch, but not enough to provide a serving's worth of antioxidants and health-promoting phytochemicals. Many people concerned about calorie content focus on the amount and type of salad dressing they use. But there is another, major consideration. Each half-cup of pasta supplies about 100 calories, but the same amount of chopped vegetables supplies only about 25. By switching the proportions of

salad ingredients so there are at least equal amounts of vegetables and pasta (preferably, more veggies), you can cut at least 75 calories from each one-cup portion.

You can also use this technique at the deli. Start with the regular pasta salad and add an equal amount of chopped vegetables. (Use the salad bar if you're rushed.) So much dressing is usually used on these salads that yours will likely still be moist with the added vegetables. But, if needed, use only a dash more dressing or light mayonnaise to reach the right consistency.

Proportions can also get out of control with sandwiches and subs. To keep hunger at bay for several hours, adequate protein is important. But a towering sandwich or sub with a mountain of meat and a single lettuce leaf and slice of tomato is out of proportion. Start with two to three ounces of turkey or other lean meat, or a low-fat cheese or vegetarian filling. Then "supersize" it by piling on tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, zucchini and other veggies.

The same principle applies to eating ice cream, which sometimes is garnished with a dab of strawberry sauce. Turn that bowl of ice cream into a colorful fruit fiesta. Stick to a half-cup of ice cream (preferably low-fat), and fill the rest of the bowl with whatever fruit is in season. The calorie savings add up quickly, and it's a delicious way to feast on fruit. The idea is to have a little ice cream with your fruit, not a little fruit with your ice cream.

Each half-cup (a handful-size) portion of potatoes, pasta, rice, or cereal has about 100 calories. Lean meat, poultry and fish contain about the same amount, but high-fat ground meat and deep-fried or breaded choices are at least double that. On the other hand, the same one-half cup filled with most vegetables (without added fat) is only 25 calories, and a similar portion of fruit (without added sugar) averages about 50 calories.

Each half-cup trade to boost fruit or vegetables saves 50 to 75 calories. Yet you'll still eat the same total amount of food. And you're a half-cup closer to the recommended five to ten servings of fruits and vegetables recommended by health experts.

If you need help to improve your eating habits and prevent weight gain, *Shape Your Future...Your Weigh!*<sup>TM</sup> can help. Contact your local base Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) or Dietitian for more information.