



To Be Small, Take the Small Size

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You can put aside all the confusing popular diet rules and counting schemes. It's possible to lose weight with one piece of simple advice. Pennsylvania State University researchers confirm what has been advocated by major health organizations, like the American Institute for Cancer Research: Take a smaller portion.

The Penn State researchers first looked at the impact of portion size using macaroni and cheese. Doubling the portions for participants in the study led them to eat 30 percent more. It didn't matter whether the larger amount was put on their plate or in a serving bowl from which they served themselves. The more they started with, the more they ate. In a related study, participants ate more packaged snack food when given a bigger package.

In the most recent study from these researchers, people were given a six-, eight-, ten- or twelve-inch deli style turkey sandwich on different days. With each increase in portion size, people ate more. When portion size doubled from six to twelve inches, calorie consumption at the meal increased 31 percent in women and 56 percent in men.

Past research suggests that people tend to eat in units: either one or two cookies, but not one-and-a-half. That tendency, however, was not apparent in the results. The participants did not always eat all of the larger sandwiches - they just ate more.

Almost certainly, study subjects overate because the sight of more food distracted them from paying attention to internal hunger signals. While participants reported slightly

more hunger after eating a six-inch sandwich than after an eight-inch one, there was no difference in hunger reported after eight-, ten- or twelve-inch sandwiches. Based on internal hunger signals, they could have stopped at the eight-inch size and felt no different. But since they saw more, they kept on eating.

You might think that subjects who ate 30 to 50 percent more calories at lunch ate less in the afternoon and at dinner. But another study from the same researchers shows that people do not adjust later meals and snacks for earlier overeating. In that study, doubling people's portions at all meals and snacks for two days led to a 26 percent increase in calorie consumption per day. That's a total of 530 extra calories per day for women and 803 for men. If that rate continued, participants would gain four to six pounds per month. Conversely, if you want to lose weight, you should be able to lose a pound per week by cutting about 500 calories per day. Simply finding about five foods a day whose portion is larger than you need should be enough. For example, if you start the morning with a tall 12-ounce glass of juice and reduce the size to six ounces, you eliminate about 85 calories. If you have a bowl full of cereal and prepare a standard one-cup portion instead, you do without 100 to 190 calories. Stick to a 12-ounce tall nonfat latte instead of a 16-ounce grande and you bypass another 40 calories. Eating just one cup of pasta instead of the two or three cups saves 200 to 400 calories. If you really must have fries, eating a small instead of a large size cuts around 300 calories. A jumbo cookie can pack 300 to 400 calories, but split it with someone and you eat half that many. Instead of filling a bowl with ice cream, have only a cup and forgo almost 300 calories. With these easy reductions in portion size, the calories saved quickly add up to 500.

There are some foods that you shouldn't reduce in portions, however. Most of us eat

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too little of the vegetables and fruits that offer health-promoting, cancer-fighting nutrients and phytochemicals. Filling up on these foods should make it even easier to limit portions of high-calorie choices.

If you need help to improve your eating habits and prevent weight gain, *Shape Your Future...Your Weigh!*TM can help. Contact your local base Health and Wellness Center (HAWC) or Dietitian for more information or visit the *Shape Your Future...Your Weigh!*TM community website at <http://airforcemedicine.afms.mil/shapeyourfuture>.