



Q: Do prepared "diet" meals and entrées really help people lose weight?

A: A new study lends support to the practice of using pre-portioned foods to lose weight, at least for short-term benefits. In the study, women eating pre-portioned entrées lost about four pounds more after two months than women preparing meals from plans that were supposed to supply the same number of calories as the pre-made entrées. There are two conclusions to draw from this study. First, it's not just what you eat - portion size really matters. The American Institute for Cancer Research's eating style program The New American Plate emphasizes this important point. The program shows you several ways to satisfy yourself with appropriately sized portions. Second, pre-packaged meals make it easy to pull a meal together quickly without much thought. Good intentions can go astray when you have to think what to prepare minutes before a meal. If you don't want to buy pre-packaged foods, planning meals a day or week ahead can also solve this problem. Although this study shows that the use of pre-packaged foods can produce more weight loss after two months, the real measure of their worth will appear one to five years later. If the smaller portions and variety in these meals help people change their eating habits permanently, then the meals have been truly worthwhile. However, if the meals act only as a crutch and people can't eat appropriate portions and make healthful choices without them, then they are not helpful. At some point if you want long-term success in losing weight, you have to learn a new style of eating.

For more information on weight gain prevention contact your local **Health and Wellness Center (HAWC)** or **Dietitian** or visit the **SYFYW community website** at <http://airforcemedicine.afms.mil/shapeyourfuture>.

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