

What is a serving?

To eat a balanced diet, you need to consume a certain number of servings from each of the food groups on a daily basis. And it's important not only to know what those food groups are and how many servings you need, but what a "serving" is. In our culture, there's a tendency toward "bigger" being "better." Unfortunately, bigger portions can result in a larger you.

Understanding serving sizes can help you in your weight management efforts in the following ways:

- Makes it easy to calculate how many calories you're consuming
- Makes it more obvious which parts of your diet need improvement
- Helps in meal preparation so you cook less, eat less and waste less, which also saves you money

Please refer to the following table to see what a serving is and how many you should eat each day:

Food Group	Recommended Servings Per Day	Serving Size (individual servings have similar calorie count)
Grains – when eating grains, try to get as many "whole grains" as possible. Whole grains are higher in fiber, which aids in digestive health.	5 – 8 ounces per day (your exact amount depends on your gender, age, weight and the amount of exercise you do)	Following are equal to 1 ounce serving: 1 slice bread ½ bagel or 1 "mini" bagel ½ English muffin 1 cup of dry cereal (i.e., Cheerios, Corn Flakes, Shredded Wheat) ½ cup cooked oatmeal 1 pancake (4 ½" in diameter – about the size of a CD) 3 cups popcorn (popped, dry) ½ cup cooked pasta or rice 1 small flour tortilla (6" diameter) 1 corn tortilla (6" diameter) 7 square or round crackers (i.e., saltines, Ritz crackers)
Fruits – when eating fruits, try for fresh fruit over fruit juice or canned/dried fruit.	1 ½ – 2 cups per day (your exact amount depends on your gender, age, weight and the amount of exercise you do)	Following are equal to 1 cup serving: 1 small apple (about the size of a baseball) 1 cup applesauce 1 large banana (8" to 9" long) 1 cup melon 32 seedless grapes 1 large orange (about the size of a softball) 8 large strawberries ½ cup dried fruit (raisins, prunes, apricots) 1 cup 100% fruit juice
Dairy – choose fat-free or low-fat options.	3 cups	1 cup milk ½ cup cottage cheese 6 oz. container yogurt 1/3 cup shredded cheese 1/3 cup ricotta cheese 2 slices (about 1 ½ ounces) processed (American) cheese 1 ½ ounces of hard cheese (cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss) ½ cup frozen yogurt

<p>Vegetables – when consuming vegetables, try to eat some of each kind/color during a week including: dark green vegetables, orange vegetables, dry beans and peas, starchy vegetables and other vegetables.</p>	<p>2 ½ - 3 cups per day (your exact amount depends on your gender, age, weight and the amount of exercise you do)</p>	<p>Following are equal to 1 cup serving: 2 cups of raw leafy greens (spinach, romaine, leaf lettuce, endive, iceberg lettuce) 12 baby carrots or two medium carrots 1 cup cooked greens (spinach, mustard greens, turnip greens) 1 cup cooked beans or peas, whole or mashed (black, garbanzo, kidney, pinto, split peas) 1 large ear corn 1 cup mashed potatoes 1 medium baked potato (2 ½" to 3" in diameter) 1 large sweet potato (2 ¼" or more in diameter) 2 large stalks celery (11" to 12" long) 1 cup of vegetable juice 1 large tomato (3") ½ acorn squash (= ¾ cup)</p>
<p>Meat, fish, poultry & substitutes – try to stick with lean cuts of meat, as high fat content equals more calories.</p>	<p>5 – 6 ½ ounces per day (your exact amount depends on your gender, age, weight and the amount of exercise you do)</p>	<p>Following are equal to 1 ounce serving: 1 egg 1 tablespoon peanut butter 2 tablespoons hummus ¼ cup tofu ½ ounce of nuts (12 almonds, 24 pistachios, 7 walnut halves) ½ ounce of seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, hulled, roasted) ½ cup split pea, lentil or bean soup</p> <p>Following are equal to multiple ounce serving: Small lean steak (about size of deck of cards) = 4 ounces 1 small can tuna, drained = 3-4 ounces 1 small lean hamburger = 4 ounces 1 small chicken breast half = 3 ounces</p>
<p>Oils – found in many of the foods we eat, we also prepare food with oil. Oils have the highest concentration of calories per serving.</p>	<p>5 – 7 teaspoons per day (your exact amount depends on your gender, age, weight and the amount of exercise you do)</p>	<p>1 tablespoon soft margarine equals 2 ½ teaspoons oil 1 ounce dry roasted peanuts, cashews, almonds or sunflower seeds equal 3 teaspoons of oil 2 tablespoons peanut butter equal 4 teaspoons of oil 1 tablespoon mayonnaise equal 2 ½ teaspoons of oil 1 tablespoon vegetable oil (canola, olive, peanut, safflower) equal 3 teaspoons of oil 2 tablespoons Italian dressing equals 2 teaspoons of oil 4 large olives equals ½ teaspoon oil ½ medium avocado equals 3 teaspoons oil</p>

There are some foods that you simply should not eat on a regular basis, but consider them as an occasional treat. These include sugary drinks like soda, candy or chocolate bars, ice cream, donuts and chips. These foods are high in calories, so if you choose to eat them, do so in small quantities. Alcoholic beverages are also high in calories and have very little food value.

To learn more about your daily recommendation of foods and calculate your individual needs, visit www.mypyramid.gov.