

Portion Control Is In the Palm of Your Hand

Most people think the only way to control portions is to measure carefully with measuring cups and spoons. While using these tools is the most accurate way to measure portions, they are not always easy-to-use. We have on the end of our arms good instruments for estimating the amount or portion of what we eat – our hands!

The size of the palm of the average woman's hand is equal to about ½ cup or 4 ounces. In other words, about ½ cup of a vegetable or cut-up fruit, ½ cup of grits, rice or cooked cereal and a serving of meat, poultry or fish. If you are a man with a larger hand, visualizing a deck of cards will work just as well.



A woman's thumb is about the size of a tablespoon and the length from the tip of the thumb to the first knuckle is about the size of a teaspoon. Another way to estimate a teaspoon is to use the top of a plastic water bottle. Three of these tops will equal a tablespoon.

Use no more than 1-2 teaspoons of oil, margarine, or butter per meal added in cooking or added to the food on the plate or no more than 1 tablespoon of light mayonnaise or 2 tablespoons light salad dressing per meal.

A woman's tight fist equals about a cup of any liquid or a cup of solid food like cereal or yogurt. It is also the size of a fresh piece of fruit. A baseball is also about the size of one cup.



Other ways to estimate single portions are:

- ½ bagel should be the size of a large coffee cup lid
- 1 muffin should be the size of a large egg
- A tortilla should be the size of a salad plate
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter should equal one golf ball
- A serving of baked potato is the size of a computer mouse
- One waffle or pancake should be the size of a CD
- 1 ½ ounces of cheese equals 6 dice

While these estimates are good to use on a daily basis, it is always wise to really measure your portions at least once a week with actual measuring cups and spoons. This will help to make sure that your portions are not gradually creeping up in size over time.