



# PREMIER MEDICAL

## A S S O C I A T E S

### Health & Safety Corner Portion Sizes and the Pyramid

Well, spring is just around the corner, and hopefully you've all been incorporating those small little changes into your lifestyle. So far, we've discussed staying physically active, getting off to a good start with breakfast, reducing sweetened drinks, getting adequate calcium, and adding more fruits and vegetables. This month, it's time to tackle portion sizes, and getting the right balance of food groups.

There is no doubt that portion sizes have climbed out of control over the past twenty or so years. The old adage "everything in moderation" is especially crucial when it comes to the amount we eat. I have a lot of parents who have a difficult time understanding why their child is gaining too much weight because what they eat is not all junk food and sweets. The answer is often found in the *amount* they are eating, and sometimes the only way to get a realistic view of how much is going in, is to keep a journal of everything that is eaten. Doing this over several days can be really helpful. With older kids, encouraging them to keep their journal helps them appreciate their intake more, and holds them accountable. It may seem like a pain to start with, but over time, it is a great tool in establishing healthy eating habits. Check out the web site [www.hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion](http://www.hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion) and take the portion distortion quiz. You'll learn how much portion sizes have expanded, how many extra calories there are in the larger amount, and how much exercise you would need to burn off those calories. It's definitely eye-opening!

We're all familiar with the food pyramid, and the basic food groups. This was recently revamped, so that instead of servings per day of each food group, there is a recommended number of cups or ounces of each group. It also suggests including whole grains, beans, and

good oils such as from fish and nuts. The web site is [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov). I highly recommend it to everyone. You can make a personalized plan for yourself and your children based on age, height, weight and activity level (ages 2-8 are not based on height and weight but follow age-related norms). It will give you the recommended number of calories per day as well. There are also lots of activities for the kids, including a printout for a food tracker, so they can journal their food intake. In case you don't have time immediately to go to the website, you want to aim each day serving your child:

- 6 ounces of grains (at least half of which is whole grains)
- 2 ½ cups of vegetables
- 1 ½ cups of fruits
- 3 cups of milk (2 cups for ages 2 to 8)
- 5 ounces of lean meat and beans
- Small amounts of oils from fish, nuts, and soybean, corn or canola oil
- Limited amounts of sugars and fats

**This will change slightly when you get the personalized plan. For instance, my six year old needs 4 oz. of grains, 3 oz. of meat, 1 ½ cups of veggies, 1 cup of fruit and 2 cups of milk.**

**If you are one who is comfortable with the old pyramid which dealt with servings, I personally think that's okay, as long as you stick to a true serving size, and remember to include whole grains, beans, and good oils. It may be helpful to think of portion sizes in terms of familiar objects, so you can easily eyeball amounts and not feel as if you have to be constantly measuring. Some examples are:**

- 1 cup of fruits or veggies = the size of a baseball or your fist
- 1 medium potato = the size of a computer mouse
- 1 serving of meat = a deck of cards or the palm of your hand
- 1 ounce of cheese = a pair of dice or the length of your thumb

*A very simplified alternative is to fill up your plate so that ½ of it contains fruits and veggies, ¼ is lean meat, and ¼ is whole grains.*

**This ends our series on nutrition for this school year. Even if you haven't made all of the changes yet, don't give up! Make a list and slowly make alterations-- before you know it, your family will be eating healthier without even realizing it!**

## **Patient Information**

### **Medical Disclaimer**

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