Type 2 Diabetes: Estimating Portion Sizes

Quick Tips for Controlling Serving Sizes
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Estimating portion size is paramount when it comes to dealing with type 2 diabetes. Monitoring how much you eat can help you lose weight (if you need to) and manage your blood glucose levels.

Many people with diabetes overestimate normal serving sizes, so it’s especially important to learn how to control portions at each meal.

When cooking at home, it’s easy to control portion sizes because you can use a scale and measuring cups and spoons. But, it’s also easy to estimate portion sizes by using the different parts of your hand, such as your thumb, and common household objects.

Using Your Hand to Measure Portion Sizes
A closed fist is about the size of 1 cup. Below, we give you examples of what a fist-sized portion of food looks like.

- Pasta or potato = 2 carbs (1/2 cup of cooked pasta or potato = 1 carbohydrate choice)
- Cooked rice = 3 carbs (1/3 cup cooked rice = 1 carbohydrate choice)
- Strawberries = 1 carb (1 cup of strawberries = 1 carbohydrate choice)
- Salad greens = 1 vegetable choice

You can also use your thumb to estimate portion sizes. Your thumb is about the size of a tablespoon: Use your thumb for determining the portion sizes of fats, such as butter, margarine, mayonnaise, or oil. Some examples are below.

- 1 ounce of cheese
- 1 tablespoon of salad dressing
- 1 tablespoon of peanut butter

Other Helpful Portion Control Tips
You can also use common household objects, such as a tennis ball and a computer mouse, to estimate portion sizes. See the examples below for how to do this.

- Tennis ball = 1 ounce of cereal
- Computer mouse = 1 medium 5-ounce potato
- Bar of soap = 3 to 4 ounces of chicken, fish, or meat
- Four dice = 1 ounce of cheese
- Hockey puck = 3-ounce bagel

Although it takes some work to learn how to correctly estimate portion sizes, overtime, it’ll become a healthy habit.

Adapted from: http://www.diabeticlifestyle.com/eating-well/type-2-diabetes-estimating-portion-sizes
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Determining Portion Sizes at Restaurants
Be cautious when eating at restaurants: They often serve dishes that are enough to feed 2 or 3 people—sometimes more. However, you can still eat at restaurants when you have diabetes. Split an entree with a friend or ask the waiter to package half of your meal before it's even served.

For more information on how to determine portion sizes at restaurants and at home, consult your registered dietitian or certified diabetes educator. He or she can help you with estimating portion sizes and give you recommendations on what to eat to manage type 2 diabetes.

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