

Is It a Portion or a Serving?

A portion is the amount of food you choose to eat. There is no standard portion size and no single right or wrong portion size. A portion is what you serve yourself or what might come in one food package or what a restaurant might give you. You might also think of a portion as a helping.

A serving is a standard amount used to help give advice about how much to eat or to identify how many calories and nutrients are in a food. For example, a sandwich has two slices of bread. According to MyPyramid, the serving size for bread is one slice. The portion in your sandwich is two slices, which equals two servings.

A common problem today is that when we look at a standard serving of a food or beverage, it looks very small in comparison to the portions of foods we see in restaurants and in food packages. It's not a problem with your eyes! We call this portion distortion! The portions are way too big. You have to look at the Nutrition Facts Label on food packages to see how many servings are in a package.

Here are some easy tips for how you can tell what a healthy portion is - show students these objects:

- A serving of nuts is a small handful
- For meat, a deck of cards serves as a good eyeball guess
- For cheese, four dice equals one serving
- For fruits and vegetables, a computer mouse or a tennis ball is about the size of a half-cup of vegetables
- For milk, a serving is equal to a school-size carton or a carton of yogurt