



BRITISH  
Nutrition  
FOUNDATION

# FIND YOUR balance

**GET PORTION WISE!**



**An easy guide for finding  
the right balance for you**



## Why think ABOUT PORTION SIZE?

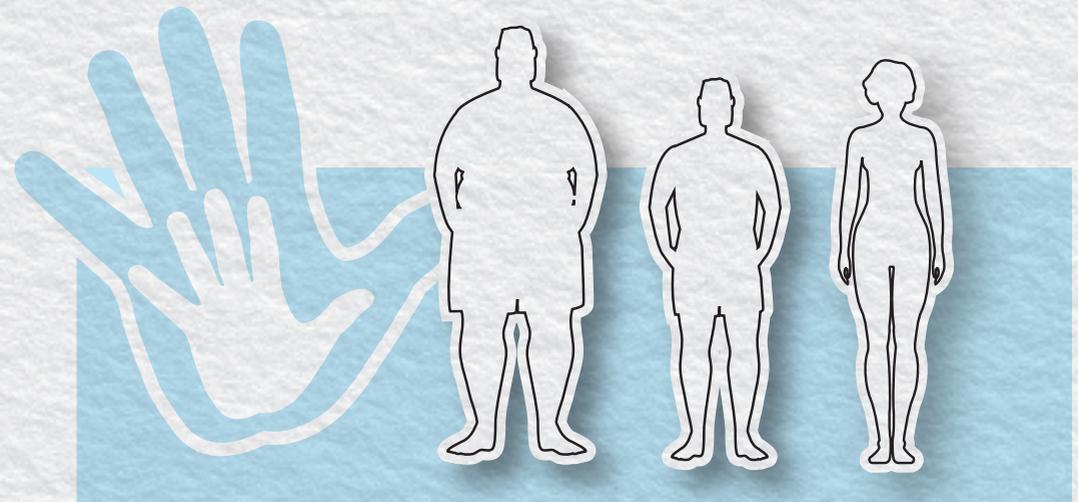
**Most of us probably don't think about portion size when we eat. But having a balanced diet is about getting the right types of food and drinks in the right amounts.**

**This guide aims to help you find the right balance for you – it's not only about eating less, it's also about eating differently!**

## Getting PORTION SIZE RIGHT FOR YOU

**We're all individuals with different needs. But, for healthy adults the types of different food and drinks we need are pretty much the same for all of us. However, the amount of food we need varies from person to person.**

The portion sizes in this guide are averages for healthy adults. If you're tall or very active you may need more, if you're a small person or are trying to lose weight you may need smaller portions. If you're measuring with your hands then these will vary with the size of your hands, and so generally bigger people will automatically get bigger portions and smaller people will get smaller portions.



There are lots of different ways to eat a healthy, balanced diet – you can use this guidance to fit with your preferences and beliefs – from Mediterranean, vegetarian or vegan to a more traditional British diet.

**It's about balancing the food groups and finding the portion sizes that are right for you!**

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide aims to give you an idea of the portion sizes of different foods and drinks and how often to eat foods from different food groups.

We've used the same food groups as shown in the Government's Eatwell Guide, and suggested how often you could have foods and drinks from each group across the day.

These are:



 <b>FRUIT AND VEGETABLES</b> A variety of different types a day	<b>5+</b>
 <b>STARCHY CARBOHYDRATES</b> Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and others	<b>3-4</b>
 <b>PROTEIN FOODS</b> Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and others	<b>2-3</b>
 <b>DAIRY AND ALTERNATIVES</b> Yogurt, cheese, milk and alternatives	<b>2-3</b>
 <b>UNSATURATED OILS AND SPREADS</b>	<b>SMALL AMOUNTS</b>

We've also given some guidance on how you could measure your portion sizes. If you want to be really accurate then the best way is to weigh your food. But you can also use measures, like hands and spoons, to give you an idea of what's the right portion size. The portion sizes we give are based on having 2000kcal per day – the amount estimated for an average, healthy weight adult woman.

# PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Here is an example of how this could work across a day:

Meal:	Foods included:	Fruit & veg	Starchy	Protein	Dairy
Breakfast	2 wheat biscuits with semi-skimmed milk		✓		✓
	1 banana	✓			
	Small glass of orange juice (150ml)	✓			
Morning snack	Apple	✓			
Lunch	Baked potato about the size of your fist		✓		
	Tuna mayonnaise made with a whole medium-sized tin of tuna			✓	
	Cereal bowl full of mixed salad	✓			
Afternoon snack	2 tangerines	✓			
	2 oatcakes with reduced fat soft cheese		✓		✓
	Dinner	Spaghetti Bolognese served with the amount of cooked spaghetti that would fit in two hands cupped together	✓	✓	✓
	3 serving spoons or more of broccoli	✓			✓
	Small pot of low fat fruit yogurt				✓
<b>TOTAL PORTIONS PER DAY</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

## MEASURES

### A Handful



### Cupped hands



### A fist



### Finger and thumb

(A hole the size of a £1 coin)



### Two thumbs



## Starchy carbohydrates. 3-4 a day

Choose 3-4 portions of starchy foods a day. If having 4, for most people one portion should be snack-sized.

Go for wholegrain and higher fibre options like wholemeal pasta and potatoes with skins when you can.

**Less than 200kcal**  
For lighter meals and breakfast



**Flaked breakfast cereal** – about three handfuls  
(40g, 130-150kcal)



**2 slices of medium sliced bread**  
(80, 174kcal)

**200kcal or more**  
Mostly for main meals



**Pasta** – about the amount you can fit in 2 cupped hands  
(180g, 270kcal)



**Baked potato** – about the size of your fist  
(220g, 213kcal)

**Snacks**  
Less than 150kcal



**2 oatcakes**  
(24g, 109kcal)



**Plain popcorn** – about 3 handfuls  
(20g, 94kcal)



## Protein foods. 2-3 a day

Choose 2-3 portions of these foods a day. Beans, lentils, chickpeas and other pulses are good choices as they contain fibre, are low in fat and provide vitamins and minerals. Try to have two portions of fish a week, one of which should be an oily fish like salmon or mackerel (some groups need to restrict intake of certain kinds of fish – see [NHS webpage on fish](#) for more information).

**Less than 200kcal**  
For lighter meals and breakfast



**2 boiled eggs**  
(120g, 172kcal)



**Baked beans**  
– about half a standard can  
(200g, 162kcal)



**Piece of grilled chicken breast (without skin)**  
– about half the size of your hand  
(120g, 178kcal)

**200kcal or more**  
Mostly for main meals



**Fresh salmon (cooked)**  
– about half the size of your hand  
(100-140g, 239-355kcal)



**Beef steak (cooked)**  
– about half the size of your hand  
(130g, 310kcal)

**Snacks**  
Less than 150kcal



**Unsalted nuts and seeds** – small handful  
(20g, 110-137kcal)



**Reduced fat houmous**  
– about ¼ of a standard pot or about 2 tablespoons  
(55g, 103kcal)



## Dairy and alternative foods. 2-3 a day

Choose 2-3 portions of these foods a day. It's a good idea to choose the lower fat options most of the time. If going for plant based dairy alternatives try to choose those that are low in sugars and that are fortified with calcium and ideally other nutrients.

**Lower fat**  
(low or medium for fat on food labels)



**Reduced fat soft cheese** – about 3 teaspoons  
(30g, 46kcal)



**Low fat fruit yogurt** – one individual pot or about 4 tablespoons  
(120-150g, 98-117kcal)



**Semi-skimmed milk cereal** – about half a glass  
(125ml, 58kcal)



**Unsweetened milk alternatives on cereal** – about half a glass  
(125ml, 23-55kcal)

**Higher fat**  
(high for fat on food labels)



**Cheddar cheese** – piece about the size of two thumbs  
(30g, 125kcal)



**Brie** – piece about the size of two thumbs  
(30g, 103kcal)



**Full fat soft cheese** – about 3 teaspoons  
(30g, 76kcal)

Note that where we have used 'tablespoon' this refers to a 10ml spoon that would be used to eat soup or pudding, rather than a larger serving spoon.



## Fruit and vegetables – just eat more!

Try to have at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day - fresh, frozen, dried and canned all count. A portion is approximately the amount you can fit in one hand, but you can have bigger portions of fruit and vegetables as they are mostly low in calories provided there's no fat or sugar added. For juices and smoothies the portion size is 150ml (a small glass) which can count as one portion (but not more) of your 5 A DAY.



## Unsaturated oils and spreads

These are oils like rapeseed oil (usually what you buy as vegetable oil in shops) and plant based oils and spreads made from these. They are healthier fats and provide fat soluble vitamins. However, they are high in calories and so should be used in small amounts.



## Treats (foods high in fat, salt and/or sugar)

Everyone knows that these are the foods we are supposed to eat less of! They are not needed in the diet, but if you do eat them then it's best to keep portion sizes small - around 100-150kcal. For example a small chocolate biscuit bar, 4 small squares of chocolate, 2 small biscuits, a small multipack bag of crisps, a mini muffin or a small chocolate mousse. You can look at the traffic light labels on the front of packs to go for those with less fat, salt or sugar.

**Sugary drinks are included in this group – these can contribute a lot of sugar and calories - it's best to choose drinks that don't contain added sugar.**

[www.nutrition.org.uk/findyourbalance](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/findyourbalance)

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