



# Healthy Eating Information: A Tool for Patients

## The Scoop on Estimating Food Serving Size

- ❖ Eating a healthy diet is important for diabetes control. Blood sugar readings are affected by the amount of carbohydrate you eat.
- ❖ Cholesterol levels are influenced by how much saturated fat you eat.
- ❖ Body weight is determined by the balance between calories consumed and calories burned.

Learning how to estimate portion size of your foods will help you control your blood sugar, cholesterol, and weight. Like anything else, when you first start it will be difficult, it gets easier with practice.

Using measuring cups and spoons at first may help you learn what different portions “look like.” You can try to remember the level on your bowl one cup of cereal reaches, or how much of your plate is taken up by a cup of rice. After doing this a few times, you will be able to know the serving size without measuring it. This will be helpful when you eat in a restaurant, since serving sizes are often large. If you are given more than the amount you have planned for that meal, you will know whether you need to

- ❖ Leave some on your plate
- ❖ Share it with a friend
- ❖ Take the leftovers home

There are other easy ways to help determine portion size. For example, you can compare your fist with a measuring cup and use that as your reference.

- ❖ A small fist will be about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup
- ❖ A medium fist is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup
- ❖ A large fist is about 1 cup.

A piece of cheese the size of your thumb is about 1 ounce, and a 3-ounce piece of cooked chicken is the size of a deck of cards.

## Reading Food Labels

To understand what is in the foods you eat, it is important to learn how to read the Nutrition Facts listed on their labels. The first thing to check is the serving size. If you are going to eat twice as much as what the label calls "1 serving" then you will need to double the number of grams listed. If you will eat half the amount, you will have to reduce the grams by one-half.

Some foods say “No Sugar Added” on the label. By reading the nutrition facts, you may find that the food still has a lot of carbohydrates. Since the total carbohydrate counting grams not just the sugar, affects your blood sugar, you need to read the label carefully. Some foods, like fruit juice or fruit spreads, have “no added sugar” but can contain very high amounts of natural sugar.

“Sugar alcohols” are often used to sweeten “sugar-free” foods. The label may say that they contribute no “usable carbohydrate.” You will need to add half the actual weight to the carb count.

Fiber is a type of carb that does not raise blood glucose levels. Fiber grams can be subtracted from the total carbohydrate count.

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## “Nutrition Facts” Label for Ice Cream

| <b>Nutrition Facts</b>  |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| Serving Size 1 cup (228g)   |                              |
| Servings Per Container 2  |                              |
| <b>Amount Per Serving</b>   |                              |
| <b>Calories</b> 250   | Calories from Fat 110        |
| <b>% Daily Value*</b>   |                              |
| <b>Total Fat</b> 12g  | <b>18%</b>                   |
| Saturated Fat 3g  | <b>15%</b>                   |
| Trans Fat 3g  |                              |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg   | <b>10%</b>                   |
| <b>Sodium</b> 470mg   | <b>20%</b>                   |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g   | <b>10%</b>                   |
| Dietary Fiber 0g  | <b>0%</b>                    |
| Sugars 5g   |                              |
| <b>Protein</b> 5g   |                              |
| Vitamin A   | <b>4%</b>                    |
| Vitamin C   | <b>2%</b>                    |
| Calcium   | <b>20%</b>                   |
| Iron  | <b>4%</b>                    |
| * Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs. |                              |
|   | Calories: 2,000    2,500     |
| Total Fat   | Less than 65g    80g         |
| Sat Fat   | Less than 20g    25g         |
| Cholesterol   | Less than 300mg    300mg     |
| Sodium  | Less than 2,400mg    2,400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate  | 300g    375g                 |
| Dietary Fiber   | 25g    30g                   |

### Keeping a Food Diary

Many people find that writing down all the foods they eat and drink is a good first step in learning about a healthy diet. It is a good way to begin to look at how many carbohydrates, saturated fats and calories you are eating. It is very helpful to bring your food diary when you see your diabetes educator, dietitian or doctor. It will allow them to evaluate your eating patterns and help you develop a plan for healthy eating.

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