



Public Health

Nutrition Notes

Making Sense of Serving Sizes

Are you confused about what to eat and how much? Super-sizing has distorted our perception of what a normal serving size is. This has led to huge serving sizes and an increased intake of calories.

Many people think *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* has too many servings. But once you understand what a serving size is, it's easy to eat the amounts needed for good health. For example, one plate of spaghetti may have up to 3 or 4 servings of Grain Products and a whole bagel equals 2 Grain Products, sometimes more!








How Much Do We Need to Eat?

For good health, everyone needs to eat from the four food groups every day. For an adult, this means 2 servings of Milk Products; 5 – 10 servings of Vegetables and Fruit; 5 – 12 servings of Grain Products; and 2 – 3 servings of Meat and Alternatives.

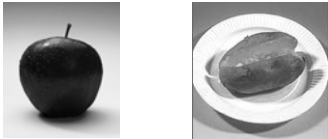

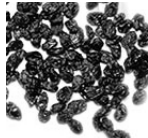
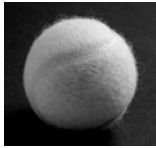












What is a Serving Size?

A serving size is a portion of food. We need to eat a range of servings from each food group every day to provide our bodies with the nutrients needed for good health. Use the chart below to 'eye-ball' a serving size.

Sample Table of Serving Sizes

Food Group	Serving Size	Looks Like...
Grain Products	¾ cup (175 ml) cereal, ½ cup (125 ml) pasta  	Fist 
	½ bagel 	hockey puck 
	small muffin 	large egg 

Sample Table of Serving Sizes

Food Group	Serving Size	Looks Like...
Vegetables and Fruit	<p>1 medium piece of fruit, potato</p>  <p>1 cup (250 ml) salad</p>  <p>¼ cup (60 ml) dried fruit</p> 	<p>tennis ball</p>  <p>baseball</p>  <p>golf ball</p> 
Milk Products	<p>50 g cheese</p>  <p>1 cup (250 ml) milk</p> 	<p>2 fingers</p>  <p>fist</p> 
Meat and Alternatives	<p>2 – 3 oz. (50 – 100 g) meat, fish, poultry</p>  <p>2 Tbsp (30 ml) peanut butter</p>  <p>½ cup (125 ml) beans or lentils</p> 	<p>deck of cards</p>  <p>golf ball</p>  <p>light bulb</p> 

How Many Servings Should I Eat of Each Food Group?

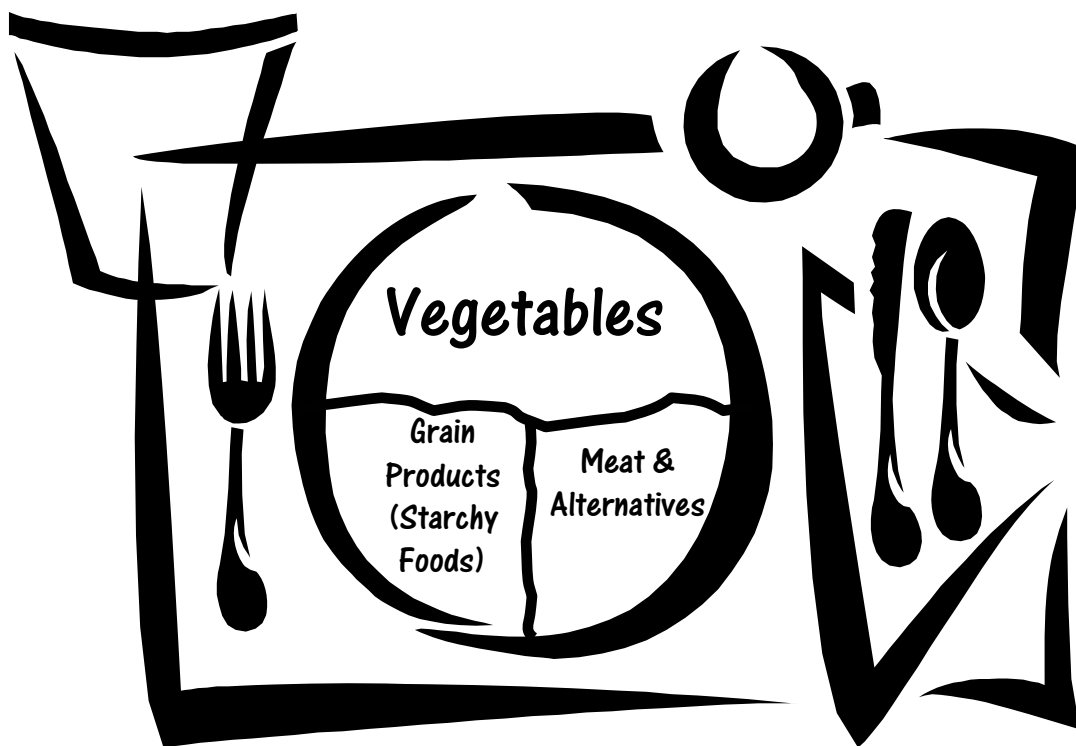
This will depend on your age, body size, gender, activity level, if you are pregnant or breastfeeding and natural variation. People with lower energy needs, such as older women or women who are sedentary, should plan an eating pattern around the lower number of servings. People with higher energy needs, such as athletes and adolescent boys, need to plan an eating pattern around the higher range of servings.

Most people can meet their energy and nutrient needs by choosing a number of servings that falls between the lower and upper range of servings for each food group. Use the sample menus below to help guide you in making food choices.

Meals/ Snacks	40 Year Old Working Female	25 Year Old Male Construction Worker
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1½ cup (375 ml) cereal with ½ cup (125 ml) milk • orange • tea or coffee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 slices whole wheat toast • 2 eggs • 1 cup (250 ml) orange juice • tea or coffee
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ¾ cup (175 ml) container yogurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 large banana • large muffin • 1 cup (250 ml) milk
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bagel with ham, swiss cheese, lettuce and tomatoes • carrot sticks • large handful of grapes • water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9” ham and cheese sub with tomatoes and lettuce • carrot sticks • 2 cookies • 1 cup (250 ml) milk
Snack		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peanut butter sandwich • apple • water
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 oz. (100 g) chicken stirfry with broccoli and red peppers • ½ cup (125 ml) rice • 1 small whole wheat roll • small salad with dressing • water or tea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 oz. (200 g) chicken stirfry with broccoli and red peppers • 1 cup (250 ml) rice • 2 small whole wheat rolls • large salad with dressing • water or tea
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apple slices and 2 slices cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 slices cheese and 1 pita bread
	Food Group Totals	Food Group Totals
	6 Grain Products 3 Milk Products 6 Vegetables & Fruit 2 Meat & Alternatives	16 Grain Products 4 Milk Products 10 Vegetables & Fruit 5 Meat & Alternatives

Still Unsure About How Much to Eat?

Use the plate diagram below to help you. A plate is nutritionally well balanced when it has $\frac{1}{4}$ Meat and Alternatives, $\frac{1}{4}$ Grain Products and $\frac{1}{2}$ Vegetables. To complete the meal, add a glass of milk to drink and some fresh fruit for dessert. You can rest assured that you have included all four of the food groups in your meal!



Adapted from Dairy Bureau of Canada's *Pocket Serving Sizer* and *Food Guide*; National Institute of Nutrition, *Put and End to Portion Distortion*, Healthy Bits No. 1, 2000; and *Just the Basics, Healthy Eating for Diabetes Management and Prevention*, www.diabetes.ca.
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