

Food Fact Sheet: Portion sizes

This Food Fact Sheet will share the suggested portion sizes of typical foods.

What is a portion of food?

A portion is the amount of a food that you eat at one time, for example how much food you put on your plate at a meal or how much is in a packet.



Why are portion sizes important?

The key to eating a balanced diet is to eat a wide variety of foods in appropriate amounts. Making healthier choices and choosing to eat some foods more often, and in larger amounts, than others.

It is important to be aware of portion sizes, as eating too much or not enough of any type of food can increase your risk of health problems. This is because your body may be getting too much or too little of what it needs to stay healthy.

As every person is different, the recommended number of portions for each food will vary according to age, sex, size, health and other factors, but this sheet provides a good place to get you started.

Carbohydrates – what is a portion?

Type of food	Portion Size	What does this look like?
Bread	34g-36g	One medium slice
Pasta (boiled)	75g uncooked / 150g cooked	Two to three tablespoons
Rice (boiled)	50g uncooked / 150g cooked	Two to three tablespoons
Potatoes (boiled with skin)*	175g	Three (egg-sized) or five to six (thumb-sized new potatoes)
Baked potato (with skin)*	180g	One medium
Puffed or flaked breakfast cereals	30g	Three tablespoons / two biscuits
Porridge oats / shredded cereals	40g	Three tablespoons
Muesli / granola	45g	Two to three tablespoons

*Potatoes do not contribute to one of your [5-a-day](#), however sweet potatoes, parsnips, swedes and turnips do.

Top tip: Choose wholegrains or higher fibre versions with less added fat, salt and sugar. For more information, see the BDA Food Factsheet on [Wholegrains](#). Be mindful that the carbohydrate portions provided contain different amounts of carbohydrate and calories.

Dairy and alternatives – what is a portion?

Type of food	Portion Size	What does this look like?
Milk	200ml (1/3 pint)	One glass
Calcium fortified plant-based alternative	200ml (1/3 pint)	One glass
Yoghurt	125g-150g	One standard pot / three tablespoons
Cheese (hard)	30g	A small matchbox-sized piece

Top tip: Try to choose lower fat and lower sugar options where possible.

Protein – what is a portion?

Type of food	Portion Size	What does this look like?
Animal protein		
Cooked meat (beef, pork, lamb, mince, chicken, turkey)	90g	A deck of cards
Cooked white fish (cod or plaice) or canned fish	140g	Palm of hand
Cooked oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines)	140g	Palm of hand
Eggs	120g	Two medium
Plant Protein		
Baked beans	150g	Four tablespoons
Beans (kidney beans, butterbeans, black eyed beans)	150g	Four tablespoons
Pulses (lentils, chickpeas)	150g	Four tablespoons
Soya/tofu, plant-based meat alternative	100g	Four tablespoons
Unsalted nuts or nut butter	30g	One handful or tablespoon

Top tip: Eat more beans and pulses such as lentils and peas, and two portions (140g) of sustainably sourced fish per week, one of which is oily such as mackerel, salmon, trout, sardines, herring. Eat less red and processed meat. Choose lean meat.

Fruit and vegetables – what is a portion?

Type of food	Portion Size	What does this look like
Apple / pear / orange / banana	80g	One medium (size of clenched fist)
Grapes	80g	10-12 or handful
Berries	80g	15-20 or cupped hands
Plums/apricots/kiwis /satsumas	80g	Two fruits
Dried fruit e.g. raisins	30g	A small handful/one tablespoon
Peas / carrots / sweetcorn / mixed vegetables	80g	Three heaped tablespoons
Pepper	80g	Half
Cherry tomatoes	80g	Seven
Cucumber	80g	2.5cm piece
Salad	80g	Cereal bowlful

Top tip: Eat at least five portions (400g) of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day. Choose from fresh, frozen, canned (in juice) or dried. Eat a rainbow!

Oils and spreads – what is a portion?

Type of food	Portion Size	What does this look like
Butter or spread	5g	One teaspoon
Oil	5ml / 3g	One teaspoon
Oil	15ml / 11g	One tablespoon

Top tip: Use small amounts of oils and spreads and measure out. Choose unsaturated vegetable oils such as olive oil, rapeseed oil, sunflower oil.

Drinks – what is a portion?

Drink plenty of fluids – generally six to eight cups or glasses daily but this will depend on age, gender, the weather, how much physical activity you do and health. Water, lower fat milks, lower sugar or sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count. Younger children need relatively smaller servings (150ml-200ml) whereas older children and adults need larger servings (250ml-300ml).

Fruit juice and smoothies should be limited to one small glass (150ml) per day at a mealtime to protect your teeth.

Mixing food types and portions

People will often have more than one portion of one food type at each meal.

Based on the portion sizes above:

- A sandwich with two slices of bread with two teaspoons of spread (one on each slice) would be two portions of carbohydrates and two portions of fats
- A meal including meat or fish plus beans or pulses would be two portions of protein
- A meal containing broccoli and carrots would be two portions of vegetables

