



Portion Control

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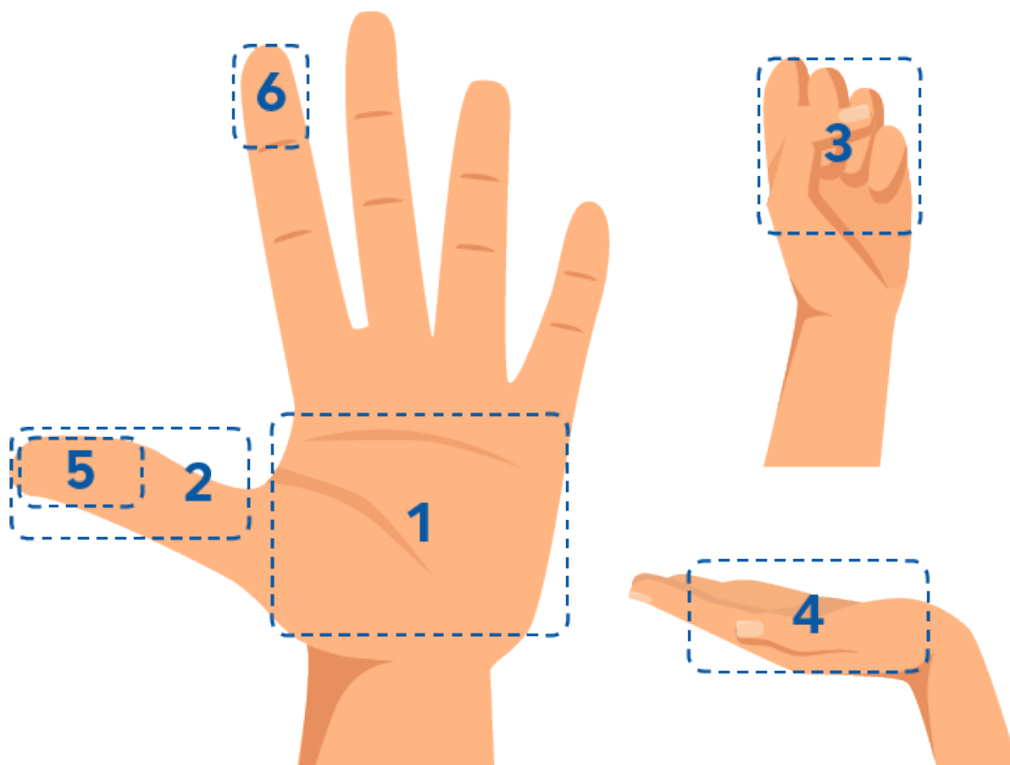
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Portion Control is in Your Hands

Choosing foods in the right portions for your health and energy needs is an important part of any healthy eating plan. The American Diabetes Association recommends people with diabetes choose nutrient-dense foods in appropriate portion sizes to help:

- Meet your blood glucose, blood pressure, cholesterol, and triglyceride goals
- Prevent or delay diabetes complications
- Achieve and maintain the body weight that is right for you

To get used to the portion size that matches the serving size on the nutrition label, you may want to measure or weigh your foods frequently. This can be helpful as you start out. However, we don't always have these tools available. When you don't have measuring tools available, use your hands to estimate portion sizes.



From "Diabetes Meal Planning," by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024 (<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/healthy-eating/diabetes-meal-planning.html>).

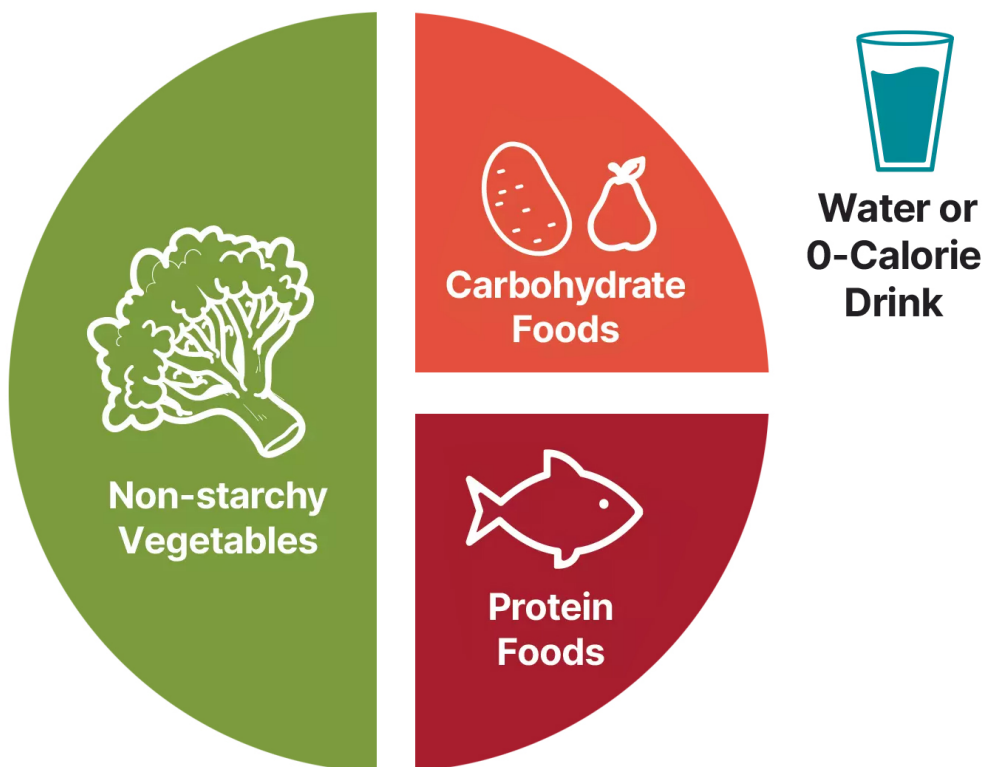
1. Palm: 3 oz protein serving or 1/2 cup serving of cooked grains or vegetable
2. Entire thumb: 1 oz serving of cheese

3. Fist: 1 cup of cooked grains, cereal, vegetables, and fruits
4. Cupped hand: 1/2 cup serving of cooked grains, cereal, vegetables, or fruit
5. To first thumb knuckle: 1 tablespoon
6. Fingertip (or thumbnail): 1 teaspoon

Diabetes Plate Method

The Diabetes Plate Method is a visual meal-planning method that is simple to understand and follow. It creates well-balanced meals to control blood glucose, and no carbohydrate counting or math is required. This method:

- Limits portion size of higher-carbohydrate foods that can cause blood glucose spikes.
- Helps visualize intake of non-starchy vegetables and lean protein.



From "What is the Diabetes Plate?" by the American Diabetes Association, 2025
(<https://www.diabetesfoodhub.org/articles/what-is-the-diabetes-plate-method.html>).

Try it: Choose a 9-in. plate. Fill half the plate with non-starchy vegetables, one quarter with lean protein, and one quarter with carbohydrate foods, like starchy vegetables or grains.

Eating to Improve Health

It's easy to override your body's signals and eat more than you need. We live in a busy world and are often served portions that are larger than we prefer to eat at one time. There are several strategies we can use to help us eat in a way that's right for our bodies and honors our body's hunger and fullness cues. Here are some strategies to try:

Take Your Time

- Sit down at the table to eat.
- Share mealtimes with friends and family.
- Avoid distractions and electronic devices while eating.
- Cook at home and prepare food from scratch when possible.
- Eat slowly to savor your food.

Choose Foods That Nourish You and Help You Feel Full

- Make non-starchy vegetables the basis of your meal.
- Choose foods with 2 grams (g) of fiber or more.
- Drink water before and during meals.
- Enjoy some heart healthy, unsaturated fat—fat helps us stay full.

Be Aware of Portion Sizes

- Read the food label.
- Use smaller plates, bowls, and cups.
- Eat with utensils.
- Avoid eating directly from the package.
- Ask for a to-go box when your food is served. Leave the portion you plan to eat now on your plate and save the rest in the to-go box for later.
- Ask if a "lunch" portion is available when dining out.

Portion Size Versus Serving Size

Portion size and serving size are not the same!

Serving size is a standardized reference amount for the Nutrition Facts label. **Portion size** is the amount you actually eat. This varies from person to person; there is not a universal portion size for everyone. You may choose to eat more or less than the serving size, depending on your needs. Calories and nutrient values on the label are based on the serving size.

Some packages that look like only one serving may have two or more servings, so be sure to look at the number of servings per container.

Eating More or Less Than the Serving Size

If your portion size is **more** than the serving size listed on the package, **use multiplication** to determine your actual calorie and nutrient intake (Example 1). If your portion is **less** than the serving size listed on the package, then **divide** to determine your actual calorie and nutrient intake (Example 2). These examples reference this sample Nutrition Facts label.

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size **2/3 cup (55g)**

Amount Per Serving

Calories **230**

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 8g **10%**

Saturated Fat 1g **5%**

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 250mg **11%**

Total Carbohydrate 37g **13%**

Dietary Fiber 4g **14%**

Total Sugars 12g

Includes 10g Added Sugars **20%**

Protein 3g **6%**

Vitamin D 2mcg 10%

Calcium 260mg 20%

Iron 8.1mg 45%

Potassium 282mg 6%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Example 1

If you eat 1 1/3 cups of this food (two times the serving size), how many calories and nutrients will you consume? **Multiple everything by 2:**

Calories: 460

Total fat: 16 grams (g)

Saturated fat: 2 g

Sodium: 500 milligrams (mg) ... and so on.

Example 2

If you eat 1/3 cup of this food (half the serving size), how many calories and nutrients will you consume? **Divide everything by 2:**

Calories: 115

Total fat: 4 grams (g)

Saturated fat: 0.5 g

Sodium: 125 milligrams (mg) ... and so on.

References

American Diabetes Association. (2025). *What is the diabetes plate?*

<https://www.diabetesfoodhub.org/articles/what-is-the-diabetes-plate-method.html>

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *Diabetes meal planning.*

<https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/healthy-eating/diabetes-meal-planning.html>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (2024). The nutrition facts label. What's in it for you?. U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

<https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-education-resources-materials/nutrition-facts-label>