



[HOT CHIPS]
This is how
many you
should stick
to. Just 40g
or 10 chips.



[HOT CHIPS]
This is
how many
you'd usually
get...

THE PILE HIGH CLUB

**WE'VE ALL BEEN TRIPPED UP BY PORTION
DISTORTION. HERE'S HOW TO DISH OUT
A HEALTHY AMOUNT OF FOOD**

Australia is home to lots of big things – the huntsman spider, Eureka Tower, the Big Banana... but increasingly, our portion sizes – and our waistlines – are becoming supersized, too. Dietitian Amanda Clark, author of *Portion Perfection*, has been tracking food trends in Australia and found that, in the past 20 years, the size of a small coffee has doubled and the average chocolate bar is now four times bigger.

In 2008, Australia beat out the US to become the fattest nation in the world, with 26 per cent of Australians classified as obese. The reasons for the obesity epidemic are complex, but it's obvious our ever-growing serving sizes play a role. According to a survey of more than 3000 adults commissioned last year by Weight Watchers Australasia, 42 per cent of us say our serving sizes were smaller growing up, yet 77 per cent of us still finish everything on our plates. And 43 per cent of the people polled admitted they continue to eat until they're stuffed. Meanwhile, the portions nutrition experts say we should be eating are much more conservative – a matchbox-sized amount of cheese, for example, or half a cup of muesli (check out the photos on these pages for more examples).



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But who eats half a cup of muesli? It's far too easy to scoff down too much – especially when you sit down in front of a heaped plateful at your favourite restaurant, or crunch through an entire bag of chips before noticing it contains “three servings per package”.

“People also tend to lose track when they're pouring breakfast cereal or adding milk to a latte,” says WH nutrition expert Kristen Beck. Even when you try to pay attention, food can prove irresistible – in a recent University of NSW study of 96 women, participants who were served a large plate of pasta ate 365 more kilojoules than those who received a smaller portion, despite the fact they had just completed mindfulness training designed to help combat overeating.

So what's the difference between portion size and serving size, anyway? We like to think we're all over this stuff but the stats say that, as a country, we need more education. Portion size and serving size are often used interchangeably but, explains dietitian Dr Celeste Naudé, they're not quite the same. Serving size is the amount of food recommended in consumer education material, like the nutrition panels on a food label, whereas portion size is the amount of food you choose to eat at a specific time – it may be more or less than a “serving” size. Got it? We've become used to massive slabs of cake and something's gotta give...

DOWNSIZE ME

What's it like to eat the portion sizes recommended by a nutritionist? One brave writer, Wanita Nicol, took up the challenge for five days. Here's how she fared...

DAY 1

Not a good start I oversleep, skip breakfast and wolf down a banana. By 9.35am I'm hungry and my lunch – a quarter of an avocado on toast – doesn't do the trick. At after-work drinks I sip two-thirds of a glass of wine, and get a few raised eyebrows. For dinner I treat myself to a tasty homemade burger – half a patty on a slice of bread. It's actually filling.

Today's lesson If you're eating smaller portions, you need to eat more regularly, starting with a good, healthy breakfast.

DAY 2

A revelation “People overeat for many reasons – they like the food, they're used to eating more, they're bored or coping with emotions,” says dietitian Kim Hofmann. Another culprit is mindless, rushed eating as a result of a busy schedule and stress.

I can tick all those boxes. Today, while fretting over the size of my teeny bowl of porridge, I think of another reason. Just like I pack too many outfits for a holiday,

I gorge on food in case I can't get any later. I haven't evolved. I'm a cavewoman in skinny jeans.

Today's lesson A few years ago I overhauled the way I pack. Maybe it's time to look at the way I eat...

DAY 3

Temptation Weekends are hard – two days of throwing discipline to the wind are a fitting reward for a week of good behaviour, right? I've abandoned my routine – and lunch – and I'm starving by the time my partner and I head to a steakhouse for dinner with friends. Words like “600g steak” and “blue-cheese sauce” shout, “Pick me!” The scene is set for disaster.

“If we eat too few kilojoules and are constantly hungry,” says Naudé. She suggests eating a small, healthy snack before the main. I order a green salad and devour the lettuce leaves like they're dripping with chocolate. Then, I'm satisfied by half a steak.

Today's lesson Eating out doesn't have to mean pigging out – you *can* make healthy choices.

DAY 4

Illusions After a busy Sunday morning running errands, it's tempting to pop into a cafe for a cheesy melt. Instead, I head home to make a healthier version. The matchbox-sized piece of gouda looks lonely next to the bread, but piling on “free” salad ingredients makes a feast. I use the same trick for dinner, a home-made tortilla, served on a side plate.

“If dishes are big, you want to fill them to look satisfying visually. Try dishing up on a smaller plate,” suggests dietitian Elienne Horwitz.

Today's lesson You don't need a huge plate of food – a smaller portion can be just as satisfying.

DAY 5

Habit formed I thought counting and measuring everything would be torture. Now I hardly spare a thought about putting a single spoon of hummus on a cracker, asking for just a splash of wine or choosing palm-sized cuts of meat.

Today's lesson It's really not as impossible as it seems!

weight loss



[MEAT]
One meat
serving =
65-100g or the
size of a pack
of cards.

THE VERDICT

This challenge conveniently coincided with a week when work deadlines and moving house had conspired to keep me out of the gym. After a week of zero exercise I'd usually have picked up some extra padding, but my physical measurements are exactly the same – so I guess my body kept its side of the bargain. More importantly, I haven't had to lie down after a meal in a while.





[CHEESE]
One cheese
serving = 40g
or the size of
a matchbox.



Perfectly proportioned meals

We asked *WH* nutrition expert Kristen Beck for more examples of proper serving sizes for breakfast, lunch and dinner

Breakfast

- ✓ 1 cup porridge oats + $\frac{3}{4}$ cup low fat or skim milk
- ✓ $\frac{1}{2}$ cup natural muesli or ready-made cereal + 1 cup low fat or skim milk

Lunch

- ✓ 1 wholegrain wrap + 1 cup salad + 80-120g tinned fish
- ✓ 1 cup cooked rice + $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegies + 65-100g chicken

Dinner

- ✓ 1 jumbo hard or soft taco shell + $\frac{1}{2}$ cup lean mince + $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups salad + $\frac{1}{3}$ avocado
- ✓ 1 cup cooked pasta + 1 cup lean mince and tomato sauce + 2 cups salad + 2 tsp parmesan

SHRINK YOUR PORTIONS

When you're an old hand at ignoring your body's stop signs, it's easier to fall into a whole bunch of overeating traps. Here's how to outsmart them...

FILL A (SMALL) PLATE

If you use smaller plates and bowls, you'll tend to serve yourself less and, over time, get used to eating less.

BEWARE OF THE GIANT PACKET

Avoid temptation by dishing out a small helping of a treat (like chips) into a bowl instead of eating them straight from the bag.

SPOIL YOUR APPETITE

A healthy snack (try a small tub of yoghurt) before a decadent meal can dull hunger, making you less likely to pig out at the main event.

DRINK MORE FLUIDS

It's easy to mistake thirst for hunger. You could also be cold, or just bored.

TRY TO EAT SELECTIVELY

Stop and think about what you want to eat - don't just suck up what's in front of you.

PUT DOWN YOUR PHONE AND ENJOY YOUR FOOD

Eating mindlessly increases your risk of overeating.

SLOW AND STEADY SHEDS THE WEIGHT

Eating a meal too quickly (in less than 20 minutes) can lead to overeating because your stomach needs time to register the food and let your brain know you're full.

SHARING IS PARING

Split large restaurant portions with a friend or share entree plates. *wh*

[ALMONDS]
Yep, only 15
almonds in a
snack serving.

