

# How MUCH Do You



## Portion Distortion

The serving sizes listed on food labels can be maddening. Not only are these serving sizes often much smaller than the amounts we typically consume, but they also come in grams, ounces, milliliters and pieces - all kinds of hard-to-gauge measurements.

Sometimes, there seems to be no rhyme or reason to it. To add to the confusion, Nutrition Facts labels do not necessarily correspond with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) portion sizes. So it is hard to know how many servings of grains, fruits, vegetables, and meat you are getting each day.

The USDA recommends between 6 and 11 servings per day of grains - bread, cereal, rice, and pasta. While even 6 servings sounds like a lot (and many people do well on much less), it is not as much as you would think.

The following visual cues should help you guesstimate portions for some of the foods on your plate and in your pantry.

**One serving of breakfast cereal is supposed to be 1 cup.**

Here's what that looks like:  
A tennis ball!



Now, how much do you pour into a bowl?

**One serving of peanut butter (or any nut butter) is supposed to be 2 tablespoons.**

Here's what that looks like:  
A ping pong ball!



**One serving of pasta, rice, or cooked cereal is supposed to be 1/2 cup.**

Here's what that looks like:  
One-half of a baseball!

How much pasta, rice, or cooked cereal do you usually put in a bowl?

(P.S. This is the serving size for mashed potatoes, too.)



The USDA recommends between 3 to 5 servings daily from the vegetable group.

**One serving of cooked or raw vegetables (with the exception of leafy greens) is supposed to be 1/2 cup.**

Here's what that looks like:  
A light bulb



That should make you feel good about your usual broccoli portion. (When your vegetables are leafy greens, one serving is supposed to be one cup, so two light bulbs).

The USDA recommends between 2 and 3 servings daily from the meat and beans group, which includes: meat, fish, poultry, beans, eggs, and nuts.

**One serving of meat, fish, or poultry is supposed to be 3 ounces.**

Here's what that looks like:  
A deck of cards!



(If your piece is thin, 3 ounces is about the size of a cheque book.)

The USDA recommends 2 to 4 servings daily from the fruit group.

**One serving of fresh fruit is supposed to be 1/2 cup.**

Here's what that looks like:  
One-half a baseball!



Yes, that means that many whole fruits such as oranges, apples, peaches, and pears are often more than one serving.

The USDA recommends between 2 and 3 servings from the milk, yoghurt, and cheese group.

**One serving of cheese is supposed to be 1 1/2 ounces.**

Here's what that looks like:  
Four stacked dice!  
Or, if they're slices, two thin ones.



Keep these visual cues in mind over the next few days and you may find yourself surprised at serving sizes everywhere.

If overeating is a problem for you, using smaller plates and bowls and even smaller utensils can help you keep portion sizes down and eat less.

Adapted from an article in [www.dlife.com](http://www.dlife.com)  
by Lara Rondinelli, R.D.