Portion Control: How to watch your serving sizes.

In the United States an estimated two-thirds of adults are overweight. There are many factors contributing to our “growth” as Americans. We are eating out more than ever before, restaurants have increased their portion sizes, and we eat more snacks between meals. Here are 7 ways to control your portions and maintain a healthy weight.

1. **Cut restaurant meals in half.**
   When dining at a restaurant, ask for a take-out container when you place your order. Then when your food arrives, simply place half of the meal in the container to eat the next day. Also, split the meal with a friend while dining out to control portions.

2. **Resist the “upsize” offer.**
   Fast food portions are already oversized, so there simply is no need to upsize. Even if it is a “better deal,” do not give in to temptation. Kid meals are a good choice at fast food restaurants; they are correct portions for adults.

3. **Pay attention to portion sizes at home.**
   Measure out standard serving sizes with your favorite foods, such as crackers into baggies. This way you can be assured it is an appropriate serving. Remember to read labels to know what the serving size is with food choices. Do not serve meals family-style. This is helpful in avoiding second helpings. It takes about 20 minutes to feel satiated after eating. Give your body time to feel full.

4. **Make meat a side dish.**
   Treat meat as a side dish, rather than the main part of your meal. Focus on healthy whole grains and vegetables, instead of using them as only side dishes. This will increase your feeling of fullness sooner, due to the increased fiber.

5. **Standard serving sizes.**
   Compare the serving sizes of foods to everyday items. A serving of 1 cup for cereals, fruit, or vegetables is the size of your fist. For a ½ cup serving of cooked rice, pasta, or potato think of a baseball. A serving of cheese is 1 ½ ounces or the size of four dice. With meat, fish, and poultry a serving size is 3 ounces, or the size of a deck of cards.

6. **Stay hydrated to avoid overeating.**
   Water is your best choice for avoiding dehydration that can lead to overeating. Skim milk or all natural 100% juices are good choices. Limit amounts of sodas and sports drinks; they are usually filled with sugar and empty calories.

7. **Do not eat in front of the television, or while on computer.**
   It is easy to overeat when your attention is focused on something else. Never eat out of a bag or container, it is too hard to regulate the correct portion size.