


# Portions:



## The right amount

"To eat is a necessity, but to  
eat intelligently is an art."

*~Francois la Rochefoucauld*



[www.wendylorddietician.co.za](http://www.wendylorddietician.co.za)

**Note:**

This information has been compiled to make it easier for you to make sense of all of the nutrition information that can be found online. It is general nutrition information and does not replace the personalised advice you would receive when consulting with a dietician.

# How Much Should I Eat?

The amount of food a person needs to eat depends on a number of factors including:

- Height
- Weight or goal weight
- Age
- Gender
- Exercise

A dietician will use your numbers in a calculation to determine your daily energy requirements, which will be distributed between the macronutrients: carbohydrates, protein and fat. These ratios are then used to craft your meal plan.

We all need to meet our basic energy requirements in order to remain healthy and to have the energy to get through any given day. Too much or too little food results in weight gain or weight loss and possibly poor health.

Most people only start worrying about their portion sizes when they are trying to lose weight. Traditionally weight loss is about a simple equation of:

**Energy in must be less than Energy out**

We need to create an energy (kilojoule/calorie) deficit in order for the body to burn any energy it has stored in body tissues.

However, it is not as simple as that!

We want to lose the excess fat that is stored in our bodies. In order to do that we must eat a balanced diet that supplies the body with all the nutrients – both macro- and micro- it needs to remain healthy and breakdown unwanted fatty tissue.

We also need to rev up the metabolism and create fat-burning machines! It is vitally important to consume enough energy to encourage the body to let go of the comfortable padding. Too little energy consumed will result in a slower metabolism and make it harder to lose weight.



## How much is enough?

Due to variations in the factors that determine how much energy a person needs in a day, an answer that meets everybody's needs cannot be given here. In my experience the average requirements for men and women are:

Men = 9000kj per day

Women = 6500kj per day

You may need a little more or a little less, depending on your numbers.



# Portion Sizes

Most dieticians will use Exchange Lists to plan a diet for a client. The foods in these lists have been grouped together according to how much carbohydrate, protein, fat and energy they contain in a standard portion. Most the the foods can either be weighed with a kitchen scale or measured in a standard set of measuring cups.

Average portion sizes per meal:

Breakfast: 1 to 2 slices of low GI bread or half to 1 cup of low GI cereal  
+ Half a cup of milk  
+ 1 piece of fruit

Lunch: 1 to 2 slices of low GI bread or half to 1 cup of rice or pasta  
+ 1 to 2 matchbox portions of meat or cheese  
+ 1 to 2 teaspoons of butter or a quarter to a half an avo  
+ 2 cups of salad

Supper: Half to 1 cup of rice or pasta or 2 to 3 baby potatoes  
+ a palm-size portion of meat or fish or chicken  
+ 1 cup of steamed veggies

Remember that these are average portion variations and may not be appropriate for you. Book an appointment with a dietician to get a personalised diet plan that meets your nutritional requirements.

## How to Measure Portions

There are a few ways to do this. The most accurate way to ensure that you are eating as much or as little as you need is to weigh your food. You need to be dedicated and organized in order to do this.

You need to have a kitchen scale and a set of measuring cups and the determination to use them! You also need to know exactly how much you should be eating.

It works for a lot of people, but not for everyone. What about those people who do not want to spend so much time in the kitchen or those that just need a general idea of how much to dish up on their plate?



# Easy Portions

There are 2 ways to judge your portion sizes without having to weigh or measure your food:

1. The Hand portion Guide
2. The Plate Portion Guide

## Hand Portion Guide



**Protein** – Meat / Fish / Chicken  
= the size of the palm of your hand



**Starch** – Rice /Potato /Pasta /Pap  
= the size of your fist



**Vegetables**  
= the size of 2 fists

Use your hand as your guide.

YOUR hand is your ideal portion guide. It is tailor-made just for you! And it goes with you wherever you go.

You can also use your hand to judge a portion of fruit – it should fit comfortably in your cupped hand as a tennis ball would.

Cheese should be about the size of your thumb.

When in doubt just divide your plate into quarters.

Fill half of your plate with veggies, a quarter with protein and a quarter with starch.

Remember that the size of the plate matters!

You don't need to eat off a side plate, but you don't want a giant restaurant-sized plate either.

The average dinner plate size should be about 22cm.

## Portion Plate

