



# A nutrition Fact Sheet



## Sizing Up Servings

At least one in four people in the United States eat some type of fast food every day. For busy people, restaurants offer convenience, choices, and as much food as we want. “Super-sizing” is a deal too good to turn down, right? Super-sized meals provide as much as 1,800-2,400 calories. They are also loaded with fat and the soda could contain as much as ¾ of a cup of sugar.

We often think the amount of food put in front of us is a single serving, when it can be as much as an entire day’s worth from a food group. Even when you are familiar with MyPlate and how many servings you need to eat, portions continue to be an issue.

The two food groups that seem to be the most confusing are grains and meat.

How many servings do we need from the **grains** group? MyPlate says 3 to 4 ‘ounce equivalents.’ An ounce equivalent is 1 regular slice of bread, 5 whole wheat crackers, ½ of an English muffin, ½ cup cooked pasta or rice, or 1 cup of cereal. Many of the bagels and muffins available at stores average 3-4 ounces or 3-4 servings of grains per item. This means one bagel contains all of the recommended servings of grains for one day!

### Estimating ounce-equivalents for grains

<u>1 ounce-equivalent</u>	<u>Visual Cue</u>
1 cup cereal flakes	1 fist
1 pancake	1 CD
½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or potato	½ baseball

Most of us eat more **protein** than is recommended. MyPlate says we need about five ‘ounce equivalents’ per day. A common serving is 2 to 3 ounces (about the size of a deck of cards) of poultry, beef, or fish. Imagine the size of a small matchbox cover – that is one ounce equivalent of meat! Remember beans, eggs, and nuts are in the protein foods group as well, which can add more protein servings than you think you are eating.

### Estimating ounce-equivalents for protein

<u>1 ounce-equivalent</u>	<u>Visual Cue</u>
1 ounce meat, fish, or poultry	small matchbox cover
2 Tablespoons hummus	golf ball
¼ cup cooked beans	large egg
¼ cup almonds	12 almonds

What’s in your cup? **Beverages** may account for a larger portion of your calories than you think! Again, note serving sizes: a 20-ounce soda is 2½ servings, not one (and an average of 260 calories for the 20 ounces). Juice and milk offer more nutrition, but 6 ounces (¾ cup) of 100% juice or 8 ounces (1 cup) of milk is considered a serving. You can reduce the calories (and lower the fat) in milk by choosing skim or 1% milk or choose water.

## How much does MyPlate say we should eat from the food groups each day?

It depends on your age, sex, and level of activity. Recommended amounts for adults who get less than 30 minutes of moderate physical activity per day are as follows:

### Fruit: 1½ to 2 cups

*What counts as 1 cup of fruit?*

- ½ cup dried fruit
- ½ of a large apple
- 1 large banana
- 2 large plums
- 32 grapes

### Vegetables: 2½ to 3 cups

*What counts as 1 cup of vegetables?*

- 2 cups of raw leafy greens
- 2 medium carrots
- 1 large ear of corn
- 2 stalks of celery
- 1 large bell pepper

### Protein: 5½ to 6½ ounce equivalents

*What counts as an ounce equivalent for meat?*

- 1 ounce of meat
- 1 egg
- 1 Tablespoon of peanut butter
- ¼ cup of cooked beans or lentils
- ¼ cup of tofu
- 2 Tablespoons hummus

### Grain: 3 to 4 ounce equivalents

*What counts as an ounce equivalent for grains?*

- 1 slice of bread
- 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal
- ½ cup of cooked cereal
- ½ cup of cooked rice
- ½ cup of cooked pasta

**Remember to make half your grains whole grains!**

### Dairy: 3 cups

*What counts as a cup of dairy?*

- ⅓ cup shredded cheese
- 2 cups cottage cheese
- 1 regular container of yogurt (8 ounces)
- 1½ ounces cheese (size of 2 dominoes)
- 1 cup soymilk (It's not dairy, but the USDA includes it in the dairy group and counts it as one cup of dairy.)

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## Oils

Oils are not a food group, but they provide essential nutrients, so are included in USDA food patterns. Oils are fats that are liquid at room temperature. (Solid fats are things like butter, margarine, and shortening that are solid at room temperature.) Most of the fats you eat should be unsaturated fat. Oils are considered unsaturated fats. In addition to oils, unsaturated fat is found in fish, nuts, and avocados. Oils contain about 120 calories per tablespoon, so the amount of oil consumed needs to be limited to balance total calorie intake.

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This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact the Montana Public Assistance Helpline at 1-888-706-1535 or [www.apply.mt.gov](http://www.apply.mt.gov). Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach.

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