

Portions: We Can Be Happy with Less

by Matthew Kadey, MS, RD

Ballooning portion sizes are considered a major player in the startling rise in obesity rates in recent decades, but current research points to evidence that we can turn this around.

A study in the April edition of *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* showed that exposure to smaller food portions can recalibrate people's perception of how much is enough. In the first of three experiments, volunteers randomly ate either larger (440-calorie) or smaller (220-calorie) portions of the same quiche-and-salad meal.

In the second experiment, a day later, volunteers could eat as much of that same food as they pleased. A week later, they were asked about their portion size preferences. The scientists found that eating a smaller portion of food during the first experiment led to people consuming less of the food the next day. They also showed a tendency to feel satisfied with smaller portions a week later. The findings suggest that reducing portion sizes for packaged and restaurant foods could lead us to consider these new sizes "normal" and, in turn, help put the brakes on belt-stretching excess consumption.

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