PRACTICAL PORTIONING AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Understanding portions can support energy balance and weight management. A **portion size** is how much you choose to eat, while a **serving size** is the standardized amount on a Nutrition Facts label. Because portions can differ from serving sizes, they can affect actual calorie intake and energy balance.

This quick everyday guide uses easy visuals—including hand-based cues—to estimate portions across food groups.



PROTEIN

Chicken, Fish, Beef, Tofu, Eggs, etc.

Portion size: ~3-4 ounces = PALM

✓ *TIP: Keep thickness similar to your palm too.*

CARBOHYDRATES

Bread, Rice, Pasta, Oats, etc.

Portion size: ~1/2 to 1 cup = CUPPED HAND

✓ *TIP: Choose whole-grain or high fiber options.*





VEGETABLES & FRUIT

Leafy greens, Whole / Diced fruit, etc.

Portion size: ~1 cup = FIST

✓ *TIP: Vary colors & types to maximize nutrients.*

FATS

Oils, Butter, Cheese, Dressings, etc.

Portion size: ~1 tbsp = THUMB (tip to palm)

✓ *TIP: Add after plating to see amount before mixing.*





SEASONINGS

Salt, Sugar, Spices, etc.

Portion size: ~1 tsp = FINGERTIP (tip to first knuckle)

✓ *TIP: Always taste before adding to avoid excess.*

ADDITIONAL SIMPLE PORTION HABITS

- Plate it, don't eat from the package
- Start with protein + fiber (helps natural portion control)
- Eat slowly → gives your body time to signal fullness
- Use consistent dishware to support awareness

References:

1. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). Food Portions: Choosing Just Enough for You. Updated Jul 2021. Accessed Jun 17, 2026. https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/just-enough-food-portions
2. Gibson AA, Hsu MS, Rangan AM, et al. Accuracy of hands v. household measures as portion size estimation aids. J Nutr Sci. 2016;5:e29. Published 2016 Jul 11. doi:10.1017/jns.2016.22
3. Science Insights. How to Measure Portion Sizes with Your Hand. Mar 26, 2026. Accessed Jun 17, 2026. https://scienceinsights.org/how-to-measure-food-portion-sizes-with-your-hand/

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