

Portion Control Tips:

To lose weight, you need to burn more calories than you consume, which inevitably means one thing: **portion control**. But you're not necessarily doomed to a growling stomach until you reach your goal. Here are some easy ways to cut portions, trim calories, and lose fat without counting the minutes until your next meal.

1. Start with a glass of H₂O:

Drink 16 ounces (a big glass) of water before you eat. Filling your belly with water will naturally make you less likely to overeat. Plus, dehydration may actually be what's causing your rumbling belly, so sipping some water before you eat may eliminate your "hunger" altogether.

2. Wear form-fitting clothes:

Wearing an outfit with a waistband or perhaps a jacket with buttons can serve as a tool to prompt you to slow down and assess how you feel during your meal. As your clothing begins to feel a little snugger, it may keep you from going back for seconds.

3. Add veggie fillers:

Bulking up your meals with veggies is one easy way to cut calories while filling you up fast. Spinach, for example, can be used as a sandwich-topper or can add fiber and nutrients to pasta and stir-fries. Other ideas to eat more veggies: swap in mushrooms for half the ground meat in most recipes, make oatmeal more filling with diced apples, and use a whole-wheat pita in place of bread so you can stuff it with more veggies.

4. Dine on dinnerware that helps you lose:

The color of your plate may influence how much you eat, according to a 2012 Cornell University study. Researchers discovered that when a plate and the food on it had a low color-contrast (like pasta with Alfredo sauce on a white plate), people at a buffet served themselves 22% more than when there was a higher color-contrast (like pasta with red sauce on a white plate or pasta with Alfredo sauce on a red plate). The study conclusions suggest that if you want to eat less, select plates that have a color-contrast to the food you're eating for dinner. Or if you want to eat healthier foods, like a bigger salad, eat greens from a large green plate or bowl!

5. Make carbs the topper instead of the base:

Rethink the way you use grains and starches. Take a breakfast parfait, for instance: instead of starting with a granola base, fill your cup with yogurt and then sprinkle just a tiny amount of granola on top for the crunch you crave. Making a stir-fry? Load up your plate with veggies and a serving of lean protein, then add a quarter cup of brown rice.

6. Set the scene for slower eating:

Dim lights and listen to relaxing music to set the tone for a more leisurely meal. Taking your time while eating increases enjoyment and decreases portions. Remember to chew slowly, put down your fork between bites, and sip water to make your meal last longer.

7. Work for your food:

Here's another way to slow down your eating: munch on foods that require shelling, peeling, or individual unwrapping. Oranges, edamame, and pistachios in their shells are healthy options.

8. Don't eat from the bag or box:

When you sit down with a bag of chips, do you really know how many you're eating? Researchers from Cornell University study found that people ate 50% more chips when they were given no visual cues as to how large a portion should be. So if you buy a bag of pretzels or tin of nuts that contains 10 servings, divide the contents of the container into 10 smaller baggies ahead of time.

9. *Slurp your appetizer:*

Before you dive into your entrée, have some soup. Though it may seem counterintuitive to add more to your meal, starting a meal with soup may help you reduce your overall calorie intake. In a 2007 study, people who ate soup before their lunch entrée reduced their total calorie intake by 20%. Your best bet: a broth-based soup, preferably with veggies to help you feel full from the natural fiber’.

10. *Take a lap before serving yourself:*

In a Cornell University study researchers observed people at two separate breakfast buffet lines that featured the same seven items: cheesy eggs, potatoes, bacon, cinnamon rolls, low-fat granola, low-fat yogurt, and fruit. One line presented the foods from healthiest to least-healthy, while the other line had the order reversed. Regardless of which line they passed through, more than 75% of diners put the first food they saw on their plates; the first three foods they encountered in the buffet made up two-thirds of all the foods they added to their plate. So take a stroll around the buffet or dinner table before you serve yourself.

11. *Limit mealtime distractions:*

Turn off the TV and put your smartphone away while you eat. A recent study found that people who watched television during meals tended to consume more than those who ate without any distractions. In addition, for your office dwellers? Consider taking your lunch break away from your desk—in an American Journal of Clinical Nutrition study, people who played computer solitaire while having lunch felt less full at the end, and went on to eat more food later in the day than those who didn't play the game.

12. *Use smaller serve ware and dishes:*

Turns out that even food experts aren't so savvy about eyeballing portion sizes. In a Cornell University study, 85 nutrition experts gathered for an ice cream social to celebrate the success of a colleague. They were randomly given either a small or large bowl, or a small serving scoop or large serving scoop. Then, the nutritionists were asked to complete a brief survey while the study researchers secretly weighed their bowls. Those given the larger bowls served themselves 31% more without realizing it, while those who used the larger scoop unknowingly served themselves 14.5% more. Moral of the story? Dish up your own food with a small utensil onto a small bowl or plate, and chances are you'll eat less.