

# What size is your serving?

Compare the Pyramid Servings with what you eat in a day.

**What Counts as a Serving**

| How Many Each Day? | Food Group         | What Counts as a Serving   |
|--------------------|--------------------|--|
| 2 to 3             | Milk Group         | 8 oz. glass of milk<br>or<br>1 cup of milk<br>or<br>1 1/2 oz. of natural cheese<br>or<br>1 oz. of natural cheddar cheese   |
| 2 to 3             | Meat & Beans Group | 3-4 oz. of meat, poultry or fish<br>or<br>1/2 cup of beans   |
| 3 to 5             | Vegetable Group    | 1 cup of raw, leafy vegetables<br>or<br>1/2 cup of beans<br>or<br>1/2 cup of peas<br>or<br>1/2 cup of corn<br>or<br>1/2 cup of green peas<br>or<br>1/2 cup of small lima beans |
| 3 to 5             | Fruit Group        | 1/2 cup of fruit<br>or<br>1/2 cup of fruit juice<br>or<br>1/2 cup of dried fruit   |
| 3 to 5             | Grain Group        | 1 slice of bread<br>or<br>1/2 cup of cereal<br>or<br>1/2 cup of pasta<br>or<br>1/2 cup of rice   |

*Food Pyramid - A Guide to Healthy Eating*



# Pyramid Servings: How Much? How Many?

## About the Activity

To start, use common objects – an 8-ounce carton of milk, small juice can, 9-volt batteries, roll of film, baseball, deck of cards, a computer disk and a small computer mouse — to engage parents in talking about the size of a Pyramid Serving. With the *What Size Is Your Serving?* poster, explore Pyramid Servings: what counts as a Pyramid Serving and how much to eat daily. Using the *Pyramid Servings: How Much? How Many?* reproducible newsletter, continue to learn about Servings. Sum up by restating the size of Pyramid Servings and guidelines from the Food Guide Pyramid.

## Getting Ready

**Read:** the outline to get comfortable with the messages, questions and activities

**Get:** 8-ounce milk carton, 6-ounce juice can, 2 (9-volt) batteries (taped together edge to edge), 1 roll (35 mm) film, baseball, standard deck of cards, 1 computer disk, a small computer mouse. (The poster photo shows the type of mouse to use. The PS/2 BASIC computer mouse is about the size of a standard deck of cards.)

**Copy:** handouts: *Pyramid Servings: How Much? How Many?* and *How much do you eat?* ... reproducible pages. Make enough copies for all participants.

**Display:** *What Size Is Your Serving?* poster.

## Key Messages

- The Food Guide Pyramid is your daily guide for making food choices. It can help you choose foods for a day's worth of meals and snacks for your family.
- Know the size of Pyramid Servings to choose the right amount of food for your child and you. Use common objects to remember what counts as a Pyramid Serving.
- Choose enough Food Group Servings to get the nutrients you need. Eating different types of foods helps your child grow and helps your whole family stay healthy.
- What you and your child eat over several days, not just one day, is what counts.



# Do You Know?

**S**mart eating is part of growing and staying healthy. Use the Food Guide Pyramid as your guide for making daily food choices. Paying attention to the size of Pyramid Servings can help you find out if you eat enough or too much of some foods.

**The size, or amount, of a Pyramid Serving may be less or more than what you usually eat at one time.**

- **Grains Group**
  - 1 slice bread, waffle, or pancake
  - about 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal
  - 1/2 cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta
  - 1/2 bagel, hamburger bun, or English muffin
- **Vegetable Group**
  - 1 cup raw, leafy vegetables
  - 1/2 cup vegetables (cooked or raw)
  - 3/4 cup vegetable juice
- **Fruit Group**
  - 1 medium apple, banana, or orange
  - 1/2 cup fruit (canned, cooked, or raw)
  - 3/4 cup fruit juice
  - 1/2 cup dried fruit
- **Milk Group**
  - 1 cup milk or yogurt
  - 1 1/2 ounces natural cheese (like Cheddar)
  - 2 ounces processed cheese (like American)
- **Meat & Beans Group**
  - 2 – 3 ounces cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish
  - 1 cup cooked dry beans counts as 2 ounces of lean meat
  - 2 tablespoons peanut butter counts as 1 ounce of meat

## How much do you eat – and need?

How much do you need of each kind of food? The Pyramid gives recommended amounts. You need to eat different amounts from the five major food groups. You need more Pyramid Servings of some foods than others.

The amount you need depends on your age, how active you are and if you are male or female. The more you move, the more you can eat without gaining weight. Most people need to eat at least the lowest number of Pyramid Servings from each of the five food groups.

## What happens if you consume less or more food energy (Calories) than your body uses?

You need to know if you eat more or less than the recommended number and size of Pyramid Servings:

- *If you don't eat enough ...* you may not get all the nutrients you need for energy and for growing strong and healthy. When you eat less food energy than your body uses, you lose weight.
- *If you eat too much ...* you will get more food energy than you need to grow and move. Then you gain weight. If you move more, your body uses up more food energy. Being physically active lets you be less concerned about how much you eat.



## What is Size is a Serving?

A Pyramid Serving is a fixed amount and can be used like a measuring tool to help you estimate the amount of food. Just by looking, most people don't know what size a Pyramid Serving is.

Common objects can help you estimate the amount of different sizes of Pyramid Servings. You don't need to measure foods exactly:

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| 8-ounce carton milk  | = 1 cup milk  |
| 6-ounce juice can    | = 3/4 cup fruit juice   |
| 2 (9-volt) batteries | = 1 1/2 ounces natural cheese (like Cheddar)  |
| roll of film (35 mm) | = 2 tablespoons peanut butter   |
| baseball             | = 8 ounces yogurt, <i>or</i> 1 cup raw, leafy vegetables,<br><i>or</i> 1 medium apple, orange, or pear,<br><i>or</i> about 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal,<br><i>or</i> 1 cup cooked dry beans |
| deck of cards        | = 2 to 3 ounces meat, <i>or</i> 10 french fries   |
| computer disk        | = 1 slice bread   |
| small computer mouse | = 1/2 cup vegetables, <i>or</i> 1/2 cup cooked rice,<br>pasta, or cooked cereal, <i>or</i> 1/2 cup chopped or<br>canned fruit   |

**Use the size of Pyramid Servings like measuring tools to estimate the amount you need compared to the amount you eat.**

Even though the amount of a serving on food labels and the Pyramid may be slightly different, they can help you judge how much you eat. You can use Pyramid Servings to judge if you are getting enough or too much of different foods.

### Tips for leaders:

Small children may need to eat smaller amounts at one time. That's okay, as long as the total amount they eat with meals and snacks adds up to the recommended amounts. Eating enough is needed for growth and provides the energy active children need.

# Try This for a Sharing Session!

**Display:** The poster and specific objects show different Pyramid Servings and their sizes.

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
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| roll of film (35 mm) | = 2 tablespoons peanut butter   |
| baseball             | = 8 ounces yogurt, <i>or</i> 1 cup raw, leafy vegetables,<br><i>or</i> 1 medium apple, orange, or pear,<br><i>or</i> about 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal,<br><i>or</i> 1 cup cooked dry beans |
| deck of cards        | = 2 to 3 ounces meat, <i>or</i> 10 french fries   |
| computer disk        | = 1 slice bread   |
| small computer mouse | = 1/2 cup vegetables, <i>or</i> 1/2 cup cooked rice,<br>pasta, or cooked cereal, <i>or</i> 1/2 cup chopped or<br>canned fruit   |

## POINT OUT

These specific objects are about the size of Pyramid Servings. They can help you estimate the amount of Pyramid Servings.

## ASK

- Which object equals about 1/2 cup? (*small computer mouse*)  
One cup? (*baseball or 8-ounce carton milk*)
- Which object is about one Pyramid Serving ...
  - of pasta or rice?
  - of raw, leafy vegetables?
  - of meat or chicken?
  - of french fries?
  - of natural cheese?
  - of milk?
  - of cut-up or canned fruit or vegetables?
  - of juice?
  - of a slice of bread?

**Use the What Size Is Your Serving? poster to have participants check their answers.**

- **Ask:** Is one Pyramid Serving of any of these foods smaller – or bigger – than you thought? What about a Serving of pasta: is it smaller or bigger? What do you think about that size?
- **Ask:** How do the Pyramid Servings compare with what you eat in a day?



## Refer to the Food Guide Pyramid on the What Size Is Your Serving? poster. Point out:

- The poster shows how many Pyramid Servings you need each day from the five major food groups to get enough nutrients and food energy.
- It also tells how much counts as one Pyramid Serving.
- Knowing the size of a Pyramid Serving can help you follow good-sense guidelines – and eat enough, but not too much.
- Using common objects like these helps you estimate the size of Pyramid Servings to compare to the amount you usually eat.
- Each of the five major food groups has a range of Servings recommended for each day. The amount you and your child need depends on your ages and how much you each move.

## Pass out the *Pyramid Servings: How Much? How Many?* newsletter. Refer to the box, “How Many Servings Do You Need?”

- Point out: A Pyramid Serving of rice or pasta may seem small. But look how much you can eat: 6 to 11 Servings per day. Think about how many you eat at once, and over the day.
- Ask: About how many total Pyramid Servings from the Grains Group do you need daily? How does that compare to what you eat in a day?
- Point out: You need fewer Pyramid Servings if you move less, and more if you move more. Being physically active allows you to be less concerned about how much you eat.
- Ask: How many Pyramid Servings does your child need each day from the Grains Group? Milk Group? Meat & Beans Group? Vegetable Group? Fruit Group?

### Point out:

- Pyramid Servings show the types and amount of food children and adults need to eat for an entire day.
- Young children (age 2 to 6 years) have small stomachs. They can only eat a small amount of food at one time. Offer children 2 to 3 years old about 2/3 of a Pyramid Serving. They still need a total of 2 Servings of milk each day.

### Sum Up:

- Repeat what counts as a Pyramid Serving for different foods, using the objects on display to show size: for example, “a small computer mouse is a 1/2 cup of pasta, or 1/2 cup cooked vegetables, or 1/2 cup canned or chopped fruit.”
- Pass out the reproducible, as a reminder to use at home. The *Pyramid Servings: How Much? How Many?* newsletter is also a good personal reference.
- Reinforce: *The Food Guide Pyramid offers basic guidance for eating. Pay attention to the Pyramid Servings so you eat enough food, but not too much. Help your child and other family members eat the right amount, too.*

## Extend the Sharing Session Now or Later

For more interactive learning, put the objects (deck of cards, baseball, computer mouse, etc.) in a bowl or on a plate to show how the amount of food looks when it's served. **Ask:**

- If this object was a Serving of meat, or a salad, or pasta, would it seem to be a little or a lot of food?
- Are you surprised by the size of a Pyramid Serving?
- How do the size of Pyramid Servings compare to the amount you usually put in your bowl or on your plate?
- How many Pyramid Servings would you put on your plate? How do they compare with what you eat in a day?

**Point out:** Pay attention to size, and number of Pyramid Servings so you eat enough food but not too much.

Involve a small group of parents in measuring the amount of food they would usually eat: for example, ready-to-eat cereal, cooked rice or pasta. Have them each fill a bowl with what they would usually eat, then compare it to the Pyramid Servings on the *What Size Is Your Serving?* poster. Talk about the experience:

- Did you have an idea of what amount and types of foods you need to eat?
- How did the amount you usually eat compare to the Pyramid Servings?
- Were you surprised by the differences?
- Will that make a difference in their family food choices? How?

**Point out:** Bigger amounts of food add up to more food energy (calories). Pay attention to the Pyramid Servings so you eat enough food for the day, but not too much. Encourage them to repeat the activity with older children and other adults in their family.

Once parents know about Pyramid Servings, explore other issues related to healthful family eating presented in the *Nibbles for Health* newsletters, for example:

- No. 1 Healthy Eating for Your Family
- No. 2 Food Guide Pyramid for Your Young Child
- No. 3 How Much Is Enough?
- No. 6 Why Breakfast?
- No. 8 Enjoying the Family Meal
- No. 11 Family Meals –Fast, Healthful!
- No. 12 Let's Eat Out! Healthful Fast Foods



# Additional Resources

## For more information...

For more educational resources and information on the Food Guide Pyramid, food labeling and other food, nutrition, and health issues, contact:

Food and Nutrition Information Center  
USDA/National Agriculture Library  
Room 304, 10301 Baltimore Blvd.  
Beltsville, MD 20705-2351  
Tel: 301-504-5719  
Fax: 301-504-6409  
Internet information and publication requests to [fnic@nal.usda.gov](mailto:fnic@nal.usda.gov)  
Web site: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic>

The Child Care Nutrition Resource System  
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/Childcare>

Tickle Your Appetite for Child Care  
Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/index.htm>

The Food Guide Pyramid  
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion,  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
<http://www.usda.gov/cnpp>

It's All About You!  
Dietary Guidelines Alliance  
<http://www.ific.org/iaay>





