

# Let your hand be the key to judge serving sizes . . .

By [Eve Lees](#), Certified Nutrition Coach, March 2016

Knowing the serving sizes of foods or food groups is helpful in losing weight or maintaining a healthy bodyweight. Following the serving sizes is a fairly accurate way to be sure you aren't over eating. The trouble is, many of us don't know, or have trouble remembering what a serving size is. Using your hand can be a helpful tool. At each main meal, your hand can be a *general* guide for the amount of food to put on your plate.



**VEGETABLES:** A serving of vegetables should be at *minimum* the size of your fist (or one cup). But I advocate eating much more! In fact, try to get into the practice of filling at *least* half your plate with vegetables at each of your main meals. Yes, even at breakfast: Have a salad with your egg! But if this seems weird to you, add spinach and other veggies to scrambled eggs or your cooked oats.



**PROTEIN:** A serving of protein (meat, dairy, or legumes) would be roughly equivalent to the size of the palm of your hand. A bigger person has a bigger hand, so they would have larger portions of this food group. But for the average-sized person, this could be translated into 2 - 3 oz's of meat, one whole egg or 2 to 3 egg whites, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 cup milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, or legumes.



**COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES:** A serving of a whole grain (quinoa, rice, etc.) or a starchy or root vegetable (potato, sweet potato, etc.) would be about a 'cupped' handful, or approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (depending on how big your hand is!). However, if you are very active, or exercise at high intensities, you may need to have twice this amount at one or two of your daily main meals.



**FAT:** A serving of fat (cheese, olives, nuts/seeds, avocado, oils, butter, and nut butters) is about the size of your thumb – which can also (particularly for oils and butters) be measured at about a tablespoon.



**FRUIT:** One whole medium-sized fruit (or equivalent in size to that) is considered a serving. Enjoy fresh fruit as dessert after one or two of your daily meals. If having as a snack, eat the fruit with a serving of 'fat' or 'protein,' like nuts, cheese, hard-boiled eggs, yogurt, or spread avocado on your sliced fruit. The healthy fat and protein in these foods will help buffer any sugar hit the fruit may cause in individuals who may be more sensitive to the natural sugars in fruit. Plus, fat and protein keep you 'fuller' longer. For more snack ideas [visit here](#).

For a detailed guide of serving sizes: <http://www.dietitians.ca/Your-Health/Nutrition-A-Z/Serving-size.aspx>

More often, choose to eat fresh foods that aren't as tampered with or changed by humans: whole foods that our bodies can properly process and use. Choose from a wide variety of fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, root and other 'starchy' vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds, cooked whole grains, and natural meat and dairy choices. Prepare them simply. *Bon appetit!*

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