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Use Your Plate to Control Your Weight

A smaller plate can trick your mind into thinking you are eating more

While counting calories and measuring all your food are very effective ways to control your food intake, you can also use your plate, bowl, cup and glass to help as well. Just by filling your dishes and beverage containers appropriately, you can cut hundreds of calories.

First, let's look at your plate. How big is it? Many dinner plates are 10-12 inches in diameter. If you look at older china sets that your grandmother used, you will notice that the dinner plates were only about 8-9 inches wide. This is what we now call a lunch or salad plate. If you use the smaller plate size, you will trick your eye into thinking that you are eating more while you are actually eating less. Just using that smaller plate and not piling the food too high, you can cut at least 200 calories.

Now look at what you serve on the plate. How much of the plate has meat, chicken or fish and how much contains vegetables? If half the plate is filled with meat, chicken or fish and only a fourth or less is filled with green, yellow or orange vegetables, you need to switch. Instead fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables like broccoli, greens, green beans, tomatoes, carrots, beets, cauliflower, beets, zucchini, yellow squash and cabbage. Do not season these vegetables with butter or fatback. Rather cook them in

A smaller plate can make a big difference in your calorie intake.

lowfat, low sodium broth, lemon juice, chopped onions and garlic and some herbs. Vinegar and hot sauce can also enhance their flavor. Or eat them raw in a salad with low calorie dressing and you can eat double the amount. Eating this many vegetables will help you to eat less of the higher calorie meat, fish and poultry.

Is there a starch on the plate? Starches include grain foods like bread, rolls, pasta and rice and starchy vegetables like white and sweet potatoes, corn, cooked dried beans like black and pinto beans, butternut and acorn squash and baked beans. Again the portion for these foods should be only about one-

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fourth of the plate. That is often much less than what people eat, especially for pasta.

Fortunately the starchy vegetables provide fiber to fill you up. The grain products will also be more satisfying if you choose whole grain versions like whole wheat bread and rolls, brown rice, and whole wheat pasta. Many people think you need to give up starches, but that is not true. We just need to control our portions. Again eating more of the non-starchy vegetables will help to curb your appetite.

Look at your bowl. The size of bowls has also doubled in the last few years. Fill your bowl with a cup of soup or cereal. Mark that place in your current bowl or get a smaller bowl to help control your intake.

Now let's look at what you are drinking. Is it a sugary drink? The best substitute is water or 8 ounces of low fat or non-fat milk. Milk seems to make us feel fuller with less food. It is a good idea to drink water with the main part of the meal and then top the meal off with some milk. If you cannot drink cow's milk try light yogurt, low fat soy milk or other milk substitute fortified with calcium. Measure how much 8 ounces looks in your favorite glass or cup and mark it on the side.

We also often want something sweet to finish off our meal. The best dessert is fresh fruit. There are so many varieties to choose from at this time of year – citrus fruits like oranges, tangelos, grapefruit and tangerines and other seasonal fruits like apples, pears, pineapple, bananas and grapes. The good news is that different fruits are plentiful at different times of the year so you can change often.

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