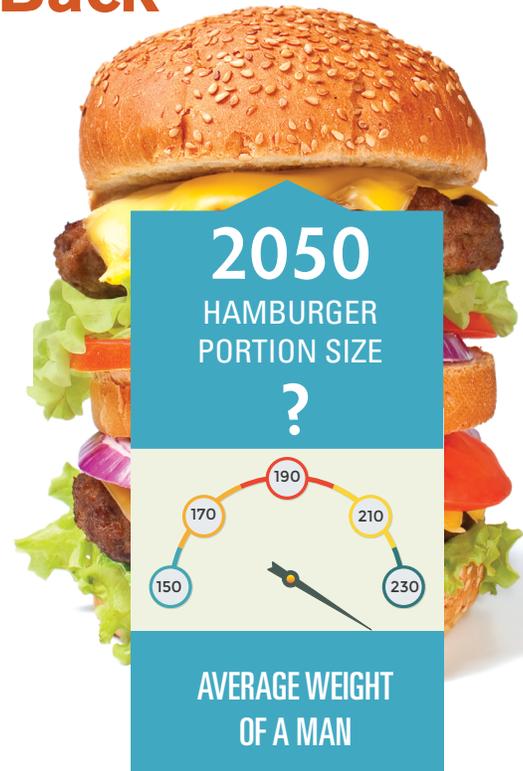
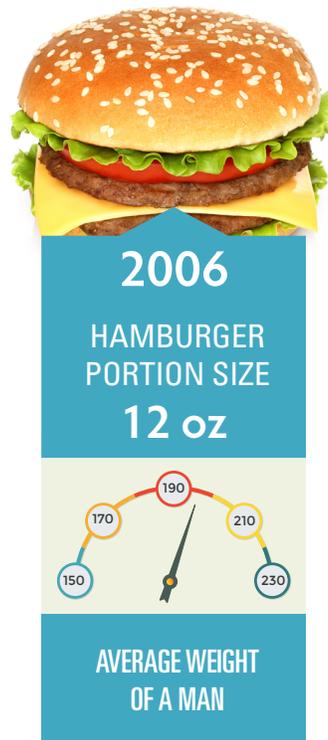
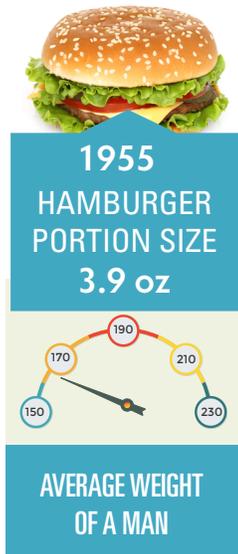


## Time to Scale Back



Maintaining a healthy weight is more than just eating the right foods and being active—150 minutes of brisk activity per week is optimal! Even if you eat well (let's face it, none of us are perfect, and the good news is we don't have to be) and exercise a lot, portion distortion can still sabotage your health goals.

Since the 1950s, portion sizes have gotten bigger and bigger, and not just at restaurants. Even the meals we make at home have increased in size, according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.

Portion distortion is contributing to our country's growing obesity problem. More than one-third of American adults (78.6 million) are obese; rates of obesity have been climbing steadily, on pace with trends in portion size. As healthcare professionals attempt to combat the crisis, they're finding that portion distortion is playing a big role.

In the late 1990s, researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill analyzed the results from three national surveys on nutritional trends, and determined that "between 1977 and 1996, portion sizes increased for salty snacks, desserts, soft drinks, fruit drinks, French fries, hamburgers and Mexican food."

"Many people have thought that portion sizes might be on the rise, but until now, there has been no documentation on actual increases," the study's coauthor, Samara Joy Nielsen, said in a press release. "We think this is important information, not only because it documents this trend, but also because obesity presents a growing health threat both in the United States and abroad."

About a year after the study was published in the Journal of the

American Medical Association, fast food chain McDonalds began to phase out its "supersize" option, which allowed consumers to get even larger portions of the already large servings of fries and drinks that they offered. The decision also came after Morgan Spurlock's 2004 documentary, "Super Size Me," was released, highlighting the fast food industry's impact on public health.

"Restaurant meals of all kinds have gotten larger with an emphasis on getting more food for the money," the Center for Disease Control and Prevention wrote in a 2006 report. "Americans are surrounded by larger portion sizes at relatively low prices, appealing to love of a good deal. But the cost to America's health may be higher than most people realize."

The problem with skyrocketing portion sizes is that people usually aren't conscious of how big their meals are, or how much bigger they're getting. In one study, led by researchers at Penn State University's College of Health and Human Development, volunteers were given varying portions of macaroni and cheese every day for lunch, and when they got more, they ate more—approximately 30% more.

"It didn't matter if it was men or women, dieters or non-dieters, people who were overweight or not, people who habitually clean their plates or not," the study's lead author, Barbara Rolls, told ABC News. "Everyone responded to the increased portion size by eating more."

Better portion control goes hand-in-hand with having a nutrient-dense diet. [Learn more here.](#) [For tips on portion control, click here.](#)



## ANYWHERE GARDENING

Even if you live in an apartment, there are options for growing veggies and herbs. The rewards of gardening are many, including the fun and satisfaction of growing your own food and burning a few calories tending to your crops, just to name a few.

"Indoor gardening is designed for certain crops that grow well in low-light conditions of an apartment," Peter Burke, author of *Indoor Gardening*, tells The Daily Meal. "That's the key to gardening whether you're doing it indoors or outdoors. Grow to the conditions."

In addition, when first planning an indoor garden, consider what space you're working with. A tiny window, for example, won't be as productive as a large balcony or patio. "A balcony or outdoor area is the only place to produce a large amount of food, versus growing a very small pot of chives on your windowsill," Amy Pennington, author of *Apartment Gardening*, says. "That small pot you'll cut and use in one recipe, so it's fine and cute, but not for people who want to grow food at home. You have to be a bit more strategic about it."

An indoor garden can take up as much or as little space as you are willing to give it. Growing plants of all kinds, even tomato gardening can be done on a windowsill or on a table. According to Gateway Gardener, a gardening blog based in St. Louis, leafy vegetables like lettuce, spinach and kale do well inside. They're relatively low-maintenance and can thrive in partial shade. Other easy-to-grow plants include many herbs like oregano, parsley and basil.

Pennington's method involves tending to plants throughout the year and harvesting when they're ripe. "Right now on my desk I have chives, cilantro, arugula, lettuces, mint, black tea, lovage, thyme, and one strawberry plant," she says. "At the end of the day, plants are predisposed to survive. Plants will do anything to survive, to make it through, to put up a flower, to make a seed. So really it's not complicated at all."

If you haven't tried it before, gardening is a wonderful hobby. With a little work, you just might have fresh veggies and herbs for the holidays!

## *Recipe: Oven-Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges*

### Ingredients

- 3 small sweet potatoes (about 2 pounds)
- 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary
- 1/2 teaspoon salt

### Directions

Preheat oven to 450°.

Peel sweet potatoes; cut each potato lengthwise into 8 wedges. In a large bowl, combine sweet potatoes and remaining ingredients; toss well to coat.

Arrange potatoes in a single layer on a baking sheet. Bake potatoes at 450° for 30 minutes or until soft and lightly browned, turning wedges after the first 15 minutes. Serve immediately.

Nutrition Information per serving (makes 4 servings--Serving size: 1 cup)  
189 calories | 5g fat | 307mg sodium | 34g carbohydrates | 3g protein  
0g cholesterol | 4g fiber



### Did You Know?

*Sweet potatoes are in season October-December. Loaded with vitamin A, sweet potatoes pack more than double the fiber of regular potatoes.*