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Amanda Clark: Eat well for optimum health

Optimum health comes from nutritional balance and knowing how much is the right amount to eat.

Nutritional balance can be achieved by eating from a broad range of foods from each of the food groups. Try this checklist to look for opportunities to improve your nutritional balance. If you find a few worth changing, then order them from the easiest to the hardest to achieve and start with the easy ones. You don't have to attain perfection in one step.

Most days I have 4 or more servings of bread or cereal products (e.g. 1 cereal + 2 slices of bread + 1 serve of rice or pasta).

- I include wholegrain products most days.
- I have at least 3 different vegetables most days (salad or cooked, fresh, frozen or canned).
- Every day I include 2 fruits and 3 vegetables with a variety of colours.
- I have 1-2 servings of a protein food most days, e.g. meat, chicken, fish, eggs, cheese, dried beans and nuts.
- I usually trim the fat off my meat and remove the skin from chicken.
- I have 600mls of milk most days or equivalent amounts of yoghurt, cheese or other milk products (300mls of milk = 200mls yoghurt = 30g cheese).
- I mostly use reduced fat or low fat milk and dairy products.
- I mostly avoid cream, fried foods or fatty snacks (e.g. potato chips, corn chips).
- I use at least one teaspoon of unsaturated oil or margarine every day (olive, canola, flaxseed, etc).

How much is right to eat

The whole population is gaining weight and it is feared we have reached our highest life expectancy and that our children will live shorter lives than ourselves. We have become so used to eating too much that we've lost touch with how much is the right amount.

Daily Calorie Guide	Women and inactive teens	Men and active teens
To lose weight	1,300 Cals (5,460 kJ)	1,600 Cals (6,720 kJ)
To maintain weight	1,800 Cals (7,560 kJ)	2,200 Cals (9,240 kJ)

It is wise to space food out evenly throughout the day to keep your metabolism at optimal levels. Three small meals and three snacks is the best routine for blood sugar balance, as well as craving and appetite control. For snacks, fruit and low-fat dairy products are the best choices. Aim for 100 calorie snacks for weight loss and 200 calories for weight maintenance. For meals, get to know the right amount for your calorie needs. The evening meal is when we generally over-eat.

The Portion Perfection Plate has been developed to help serve the right amount for dinner. When meals are served in the proportions of protein to carbohydrate and vegetables shown on the plate and just the base of the plate is filled to 2cm deep, then an amount of approximately 350 Cals is served which is ideal for women who want to lose weight. If you fill out to the edge of this plate at 2cm deep, this is 450 Cals which is appropriate for women at their ideal weight and for men aiming to lose weight. By adding a small bowl of fruit or yoghurt or a slice of bread to the evening meal, the meal becomes 550 Cals which is right for weight-conscious men to maintain their weight.



Achieving your optimum health could be as easy as learning what to eat and in what quantities daily.

For more tips and ideas on exactly what you should be eating, visit www.portionperfection.com.au

By Amanda Clark, Advanced Accredited Practising Dietitian and Author of *Portion Perfection: A visual weight control plan* available at www.greatideas.net.au

About the Author's Professional Qualifications

The *Portion Perfection* book is supported by optional plates and bowls Amanda Clark developed as useful tools for controlling portion sizes. Amanda won the Dietitians Association of Australia's 'National Innovation Award' in 2006 and has spent the past 15 years reviewing other nutrition authors' work for listing of the best on her online bookshop at www.greatideas.net.au