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GUIDE TO HAND PORTIONING

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WELCOME TO THIS GUIDE

It is almost impossible to be unaware of trends in diets that come up as we are surrounded by social media, news and celebrities promoting new ideas and it leads to a lot of dietary confusion.

This leads to people trying unrealistic methods and continuing to struggle with their bodies and relationship with food. Repeated unsustainable efforts create a lack of trust in peoples' confidence with their bodies and we end up with so much information we just don't know who to trust.

The method of hand portioning combined with intuitive eating promotes flexible, sustainable nourishment that uses rational thought and instinct.
It is not a method to just 'eat whatever you want' but to work with your brain and eat in a way that satisfies, nourishes and satiates.

No matter how experienced a person is to refining nutrition for their goals, hand portions work, fact.

The goal of your nutrition is to create a sustainable pattern of dietary behaviours that culminate in a manner of eating that aligns with your physical goals.

The intention isn't to force unpalatable foods down your neck to achieve a short-lived physiological outcome but to re-address your eating behaviours and habits, ending up with a perpetual way of eating that both achieves and maintains your results.

Luke Seymour

Fitness Coach

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WHAT IS HAND PORTIONING AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Hand portioning is one of the best ways to eat a range of food in an amount relative to your body.

It helps you know exactly how much food to eat, what a meal should look like and which foods to eat for body composition, muscle building and fat loss.

Hand portions take out the guesswork, which means you can forget about the perfect macros and rely on your own hunger and fullness with no limitations on the amount or type of food you eat with repeatable consistency.

The best thing…you always have it with you!

It's great to use when travelling or at the buffet table, ordering food out and eating meals with friends. It is a fail-safe approach to building meals that align with your body composition goal. Here's how it works.

THE HAND PORTIONS

We obtain calories from three primary sources within our diets. Commonly these are known as macronutrients.

Depending on the source of the calorie, it may also provide us with an array of critical nutrients such as dietary fibre, amino acids, antioxidants and dietary vitamins and minerals.

Each of which contains a given amount of energy per gram.

CARBOHYDRATES: CONTAIN 4 K/CALS PER GRAM

PROTEIN: CONTAIN 4 K/CALS PER GRAM

FATS: CONTAIN 9 K/CALS PER GRAM

A portion of protein is 1 palm
A portion of fat is 1 thumb

N.b. if you use a fatty cut such as skin on chicken, Kiev's, steaks or oily fish, remove the fat addition from the meal and include the thumb in the portion size.

A portion of vegetables is one fist

A portion of carbohydrate is one cupped handful

A snack portion, if needed, would be the complete size of one palm

For those of you that wish to consume alcohol. Alcohol contains 7 k/cals per gram. There's also a hand portion method for that.

A portion of alcohol is 1 medium glass of wine, 1/2 pint, 1 bottle of beer, one single shot of spirits or 1 pre-mixed can or bottle of mixers drinks.

N.b. remove the cupped handful of carbohydrate or thumb of fat with a meal for 1 alcoholic drink.

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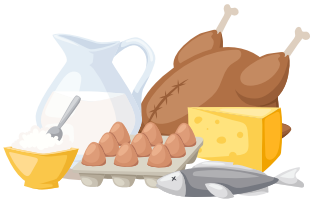
MACRO	PORTION	AMOUNT IN MACROS	MEASUREMENT
PROTEIN 	1 PALM, COOKED	20-30g	100g COOKED MEAT — 125g YOGHURT — 2 EGGS
FATS	1 THUMB	8-15g	1 TBSP BUTTER OR OILS — 15g NUT BUTTER — 2 SQUARES OF DARK CHOCOLATE — 1/4 AVOCADO — MATCHBOX PIECE OF CHEESE
CARBOHYDRATES	1 CUPPED HAND, COOKED	20-30g	1 PORTION OF STARCHY FRUIT — 125g COOKED RICES AND GRAINS — 100g COOKED PASTA
VEGETABLES	1 FIST	2-3g FIBRE	UP TO: 60g SALAD GREENS — 120g GREEN VEGETABLES — 80g FRUIT

This is intended as information only as amounts will differ based upon the size of your hands and targeted goals.

BUILD A PLATE USING HAND PORTIONS

For a highly nutritious delicious meal you can build a meal by doing the following:

1.

Start by adding a cooked palm of protein to a normal plate.

For most people this is perfectly enough but if you are exercising or have a specific goal then you may wish to increase your protein intake, especially on days you exercise.

2.

Add a fist sized amount of cooked vegetables including dark, thin skinned berries and fruits.

3.

Add a thumb sized amount of essential healthy fats.

4.

Add a cupped handful of cooked carbohydrates.

A meal like this is designed to balance the energy intake across the three macronutrients; protein, carbohydrates and fat whilst providing adequate fibre and ensuring the intake of vitamins and minerals.

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YOUR PERSONAL PORTIONS

Moderately active people can maintain their weight and improve their health with one to two portions of each food group per meal but there is lots of potential for variation based on activity, food preferences and output.

Here are some examples based on eating three meals per day.

Minimal activity, with no purposeful exercise, under 6000 steps per day	PROTEIN	VEGETABLES	CARBOHYDRATES	FATS
Goal: Losing body fat and weight	2x palms of protein	2x fists of vegetables	1 cupped hand of carbohydrate	1 thumb of fat
Goal: Improve health and maintain weight	1 palm of protein	2x fists of vegetables	3 cupped hands of carbohydrates	1 thumb of fat

Moderate activity, 3 to 4 workouts per week, 6 to 10,000 steps per day.	PROTEIN	VEGETABLES	CARBOHYDRATES	FATS
Goal: Losing body fat and weight	2x palms of protein	2x fists of vegetables	N/A	3 thumbs of fat
Goal: Improve health and maintain weight	2x palms of protein	2x fists of vegetables	2 cupped hands of carbohydrates	2 thumbs of fat
Goal: Gain muscle	2x palms of protein	1 fist of vegetables	3 cupped hands of carbohydrates	3 thumbs of fat

High activity, 6-7 workouts per week, 10-15,000 steps per day	PROTEIN	VEGETABLES	CARBOHYDRATES	FATS
Goal: Improve health and maintain weight	2x palms of protein	2x fists of vegetables	1 cupped hand of carbohydrate	6 thumbs of fat
Goal: Gain muscle	2x palms of protein	1 fist of vegetables	6 cupped hands of carbohydrates	2 thumbs of fat

ADJUSTING YOUR MEALS FOR YOUR GOAL

Eating meals like this for everyone takes some time to adjust and find what works, here are some recommendations to help adjust when starting out.

You will need more food if:

- you are not feeling full after meals
- eat fewer times in the day
- not getting the strength and muscle gain result you're after

Start by adding:

- 1 cupped hand of carbs
  and/or
- 1 thumb of fat

to a few meals, for a total of 2-3 additional portions each day.

You will need less food if:

- you are feeling too full after meals
- eating more frequently in the day
- not getting a weight loss result

Start by removing:

- 1 cupped hand of carbs
  and/or
- 1 thumb of fat

from a few meals, for a total of 2-3 fewer portions each day.

If, over time, you have not been listening to your body, it becomes easy to ignore signs of hunger until you are ravenous. This often leads to uncontrollable overeating and feeling uncomfortably full. Recognising the gentler signs of hunger (like headaches, irritability, or mild stomach gurgling) will allow you to assess where your hunger is and not let yourself stray to the extreme ends of the hunger fullness scale.

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HUNGER AND FULLNESS SCALES

The hunger fullness scale helps you better understand different levels of hunger and fullness before and after meals, it helps you respond to those levels and know the signs of your body. It's measured on a scale of 0-10, and each number correlates with a different level of hunger or fullness.

RATING	DESCRIPTION OF SENSATIONS	BALANCE SCALE
0-2	PAINFULLY HUNGRY VERY INTENSE AND URGENT RAVENOUS AND IRRITABLE VERY HUNGRY	OVER HUNGRY
3-7	HUNGRY AND READY TO EAT WITHOUT URGENCY SUBTLY HUNGRY, SLIGHTLY EMPTY NEUTRAL BEGINNING TO FEEL EMERGING FULLNESS COMFORTABLE FULLNESS	NORMAL EATING RANGE
8-10	A LITTLE TOO FULL VERY FULL, TOO FULL PAINFULLY FULL, STUFFED	OVER FULL

The scale should be a tool used to get in touch with your own hunger and fullness cues. This provides you with a deeper understanding of your body's needs.

As you can see, this is not a calorie method but a method based on feedback from your hunger and fullness. This may help guide you on the food behaviours and preparation habits to build into your diet.

WHAT TO EAT AFTER INTENSE EXERCISE

To make sure you get adequate nutrients in line with calorie expenditure, you may benefit to increase the carbohydrate amount after exercise. When you exercise, the bodies preferred fuel is to use carbohydrates and when large amounts of oxygen is also consumed (long runs, highly metabolic work) the body will use fat too.

Importantly for recovery, is to add the right type of calories at this meal. Depending on the type, duration and style of exercise, after exercise you may wish to omit the vegetable portion and add an additional 1-3 cupped handfuls of carbohydrates.

Your coach may also ask that you use a protein powder and carbohydrate mix directly on finishing.

If so, 45-90 minutes after training eat a meal in line with the hand portions as outlined with no need to manipulate the energy density of the post workout meal.

This may need discussing and agreeing with your health professional but it is an efficient, time saving and effective way to promote recovery from exercise.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FOOD TO EAT

A WORD ON ENERGY (CALORIE) AND NUTRIENT DENSITY

ENERGY DENSITY

This is the amount of energy, as represented by the number of calories, in a specific weight of food. Energy-dense foods have a large number of calories per serving and tend to include foods that have a high sugar content, are high in fat and have a low water content. These should play a smaller part in your diet.

An example of a food with high energy density could be a doughnut.

Doughnuts have lots of calories from sugar and fat that fit into a small serving size but also bundles of taste as it has a very low amount of hydration and fibre and high levels of flavour enhancers such as salts, sweeteners and sugar additives.

In comparison, asparagus has low energy density, there are only a few calories in a whole plateful of asparagus, but not a great deal to satisfy the taste buds.

NUTRIENT DENSITY

This is the amount of dietary fibre, complex carbohydrates, amino acids, antioxidants and dietary vitamins and minerals again represented by the number of calories, in that food.

To use the same example, asparagus is packed full of nutrients, yet a doughnut has very little.

Packing a diet with a higher proportion of nutrient dense food with a lower ratio of energy ultimately gives you a diet that can satisfy both hunger and taste whilst sustaining an intake of calories relative to your goals.

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Here are some examples:

FOOD LIST

Here are lists of foods and their macronutrient families, you are able to eat any foods you like and these are all intended as examples.

PROTEIN LIST

Examples of foods that are proteins include:

Eggs, chicken, turkey, beef, salmon, tofu, seitan, edamame, kidney beans, chickpeas, bacon, pork, lamb, Greek yoghurt, cottage cheese, quark, cheese, duck, game, pollock, cod, basa, haddock, sardines, mackerel.

Eat often: whole cuts of lean animal meats, fish fillets, eggs, organic dairy, legumes and lentils

Eat sometimes: protein powders, bacon, chicken sausages, vegetarian meat substitutes, biltong and jerky

Eat rarely: fried chicken and nuggets, brined sausages, battered fish, processed deli meats

FAT LIST

Examples of foods that are fats include:

Sesame oil, olive oil, fish oil, ghee, butter, coconut oil, coconut, avocado, nuts and seeds, nut butters, dark chocolate, cheese, eggs, bacon and fatty meats, cream and full fat diary, pestos and tapenade.

Eat often: extra virgin olive oil, avocados, fresh white cheeses, nuts and nut butters, egg yolks and fish oils

Eat sometimes: rapeseed oil, dark chocolate, aged cheeses, coconut oil, butter, cream

Eat rarely: vegetable oils, margarine, high fat sausages, thick heavy sauces

FOODS WE TYPICALLY CANNOT MEASURE WITH OUR HANDS

FOOD	MACROS	TRACK AS	NOTES
	1 Ready to Drink (RTD) shake 25g protein 8g fat	1 palm protein 1 thumb fat	These will vary greatly depending on manufacturer
	18-24g protein and 15-20g fat	1 palm protein 1 thumb fat	You may not wish to add additional fat to this meal or you may wish to exclude a few yolks as eggs include fat
	5g fat per yolk	1/2 thumb fat per yolk	For cartoned egg whites use 250g of egg whites per 1 palm
	1 scoop 20-25g protein	1 palm of protein	These will vary depending on manufacturer
	Per bar 20g protein 15-25g carbohydrate 8-10g fat	1 palm of protein 1 cupped hand of carbohydrate 1 thumb of fat	These will vary depending on manufacturer
	4 fish fingers 14g protein 22g carbohydrates 10g fat	1/2 palm protein 1 cupped hand of carbohydrate 1 thumb of fat	
	1 chicken kiev 15g protein 14g carbohydrates 20g fat	1/2 palm protein 1/2 cupped hand of carbohydrate 2-3 thumbs of fat	
	Salmon and other oily fish 90g or 1 fillet	1 palm protein 1 thumb fat	Depending on fish source such as salmon, mackerel, sardines the fat amount may vary

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FOOD	MACROS	TRACK AS	NOTES
	1 snack cheese 6g protein 6g fat	1/4 palm protein 1/2 thumb fat	
	1 slice bread Up to 20g carbohydrates	1 cupped hand of carbohydrate	Typical per medium or large slice
	1 plain bagel 40g carbohydrates	2 cupped handfuls of carbohydrate	
	1 crumpet 18g carbohydrates	1 cupped hand of carbohydrate	
	30g cereal 27g carbohydrates	1 cupped hand of carbohydrate	
	2 Weetabix or Wheat Biscuits 29g carbohydrates	2 cupped handfuls of carbohydrate	
	4 rice cakes 24g carbohydrates	1 cupped hand of carbohydrate	
	90g bag of popcorn 53g carbohydrates	2 cupped handfuls of carbohydrate	
	33g crisps/chips 18g carbohydrates	1 cupped hand of carbohydrate 1 thumb of fat	
	38g snack sized chocolate bar 18g carbohydrates 11g fat	1 cupped hand of carbohydrate 1 thumb of fat	

EATING MIXED FOOD MEALS

Firstly, don't overthink it… As you prepare your own food more often and understand the portions, you will have an understanding of food items and their macronutrients and you can add the nutrients it may not have or choose to catch up at another meal if you'd like.

IF YOU ARE EATING OUT

Guesstimate the portions and use rational thought. Eat mindfully and slow down at that meal and pay attention to your hunger and fullness cues. Most meals prepared like this won't have the protein or vegetable amount as outlined, so add a side of veggies and maybe some extra protein.

If you have soup and a roll for lunch, because that was all that was available, typically it has all of the vegetable portions, carbohydrate portion and fat you need. As it may lack protein you could swirl through Greek yoghurt or choose a soup with a protein inclusion, buy additional deli items to make a complete meal or even ask for additional protein side orders if you're eating at a restaurant.

The food you prepare yourself you can adjust and balance the meal to suit your preference.

IF YOU HAVE PREPARED SUPERMARKET MEALS

Additionally, if you are well versed with the details of hand portions and nutritional labels, you will be able to convert the information from the label into a hand portion.

1 palm of cooked protein is approximately 20-30g of protein
1 cupped hand of cooked carbohydrates is approximately 20-30g of carbohydrate
1 thumb sized amount of fat is approximately 8-15g of fat
1 fist of vegetables is approximately 60-80g of fruits or salad greens, 80-120g raw weight green vegetables

A nutritional label for a pre-prepared meal will include the macronutrients and it's easily converted by knowing the details.

HOW MANY MEALS PER DAY?

When using hand portioning, we also rely on your hunger and fullness. Most people do really well eating 3-4 meals per day with some allowance for a snack and a post workout shake if it works for their goal.

Intuitive eating and hand portions makes things flexible and adaptable and relies on eating more or less when you'd like to. For a consistent approach you may find it useful to find an amount of food for your every day diet and scale up and down as appropriate.

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HOW YOUR WORKUP IS PRESENTED

Here's an example for a male around 90kg looking to train hard and recompose their body (lose fat and gain muscle).

FOR YOUR DAILY GOALS YOU NEED:

PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATES	FATS	VEGETABLES
7 PALMS	8 CUPPED HANDFULS	7 THUMBS	6 FIST SIZED PORTIONS

ADDITIONAL WORKOUT NUTRITION - INCLUDED IN YOUR DAILY TOTALS

WORKOUT NUTRITION	PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATES	SUPPLEMENTS
PRE WORKOUT	-	-	BETA ALANINE CREATINE
INTRA WORKOUT	-	-	ELECTROLYTE BLEND
POST WORKOUT	1 SCOOP (30g)	1 SCOOP (30g)	5g GLUTAMINE - 3g GLYCINE

N.b 30g of protein power - 1 palm of protein 30g of carbohydrate blend - 1 cupped hand of carbohydrate

Supplements such as amino acids, electrolytes, stimulants and minerals are listed in the supplement column and are not included in the daily macronutrient breakdown.

DAILY TOTALS CALORIES AND MACROS

TOTAL CALORIES	2800
TOTAL MACROS	P: 200g C: 275g F: 100g FIBRE: 28g

PER MEAL (SPREAD OVER 4 MEALS WITH POST-WORKOUT SHAKE)

MEAL	PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATES	FAT	VEGETABLES
1	1-2 PALMS 44g PER MEAL	2 CUPPED HANDFULS 63g PER MEAL	2 THUMBS 14-30g	2 FIST SIZED PORTIONS
2	1-2 PALMS 44g PER MEAL	2 CUPPED HANDFULS 63g PER MEAL	2 THUMBS 14-30g	2 FIST SIZED PORTIONS
3	1-2 PALMS 44g PER MEAL	2 CUPPED HANDFULS 63g PER MEAL	1 THUMB 7-15g	1 FIST SIZED PORTION
PRE WORKOUT	-	-	-	-
INTRA WORKOUT	-	-	-	-
POST WORKOUT	1 PALM - 25g	1 CUPPED HANDFUL - 25g	-	-
4	1-2 PALMS 44g PER MEAL	2 CUPPED HANDFULS - 63g PER MEAL	2 THUMBS 14-30g	1 FIST SIZED PORTION

SUPPLEMENTS	ON WAKING	MEAL 1	MEAL 2	MEAL3	MEAL 4	BEFORE BED
FISH OIL		X				
MULTIVITAMIN		X				
MAGNESIUM					X	
VITAMIN D		X				
PROBIOTIC	X					X

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A COPY OF YOUR WORKUP

FOR YOUR DAILY GOALS YOU NEED:

PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATES	FAT	VEGETABLES

ADDITIONAL WORKOUT NUTRITION - INCLUDED IN YOUR DAILY TOTALS

WORKOUT NUTRITION	PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATES	SUPPLEMENTS
PRE WORKOUT			
INTRA WORKOUT			
POST WORKOUT			

N.b 30g of protein power - 1 palm of protein - 30g of carbohydrate blend - 1 cupped hand of carbohydrate

Supplements such as amino acids, electrolytes, stimulants and minerals are listed in the supplement column and are not included in the daily macronutrient breakdown

DAILY TOTALS CALORIES AND MACROS

TOTAL CALORIES	
TOTAL MACROS	P: C: F: FIBRE:

MEAL	PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATES	FAT	VEGETABLES
1				
2				
3				
PRE WORKOUT				
INTRA WORKOUT				
POST WORKOUT				
4				

SUPPLEMENTS	ON WAKING	MEAL 1	MEAL 2	MEAL3	MEAL 4	BEFORE BED

PORTION TRACKER

Your goal is to be as consistent as you can for a repeatable result.

Check off each portion box as you eat the portion, but it's all about finding the approach that works best for you.

If you're counting your calories and macros...

You will have to use a consistent measuring tool that takes less than 5 minutes to do and make sure your food is more accurate, this could be weighing scales or cup measures. You can then log your meals into a calorie and macro tracking app (such as MyFitnessPal).

If you combine weighing the food with your hand portions, this can be a great way to get more accuracy in the details. For example, weigh a thumb sized piece of avocado or cheese to know more about how this works out for you.

After you get the hang of it, you can then use any method for guaranteed nutritional outcomes.

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DAILY TOTALS (portions)

PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATE	VEGETABLES	FATS
1 ○	1 ○	1 ○	1 ○
2 ○	2 ○	2 ○	2 ○
3 ○	3 ○	3 ○	3 ○
4 ○	4 ○	4 ○	4 ○
5 ○	5 ○	5 ○	5 ○
6 ○	6 ○	6 ○	6 ○
7 ○	7 ○	7 ○	7 ○
8 ○	8 ○	8 ○	8 ○

EXAMPLE MEALS

GREEK YOGHURT WITH GRANOLA	AMOUNTS
GREEK YOGHURT	1-2 PALMS
GRANOLA	1 CUPPED HANDFUL
STRAWBERRIES	1 FIST
NUT BUTTER	1 THUMB

VEGETARIAN BREAKFAST	AMOUNTS
VEGAN SAUSAGES	1 PALM
EGGS	1 PALM
TINNED TOMATOES AND MUSHROOMS	1 FIST
WHOLEMEAL BREAD	1 SLICE
AVACADO	1 THUMB

BANANA SMOOTHIE	AMOUNTS
PROTEIN POWDER	1-2 SCOOPS
FROZEN BANANA	1 CUPPED HANDFUL
WATER, MILK OR PLANT MILKS	1 CUP PER SCOOP OF PROTEIN
SPINACH	1 FIST

SALMON AND RICE WITH MANGO SALSA	AMOUNTS
STEAMED SALMON FILLETS	1-2 PALMS INCLUDING THE THUMB
RICE	1 CUPPED HANDFUL
MANGO	1/2 FRUIT
FRESH TOMATOES, CORIANDER AND ONION	1 FIST

CHICKEN WRAPS	AMOUNTS
GRILLED CHICKEN	1-2 PALMS
WHOLEGRAIN WRAPS	2 WRAPS
BASIL PESTO	1 THUMB
CARROT AND CUCUMBER STICKS	1 FIST

CREAM CHEESE CHICKEN WITH SWEET POTATO	AMOUNTS
CHICKEN	1-2 PALMS
BROCCOLI AND GREEN BEANS	1 FIST
ROASTED SWEET POTATO	1 SMALL
LIGHT CREAM CHEESE	2 THUMBS

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