

What's your ideal weight?

There's a good chance – 62 per cent in fact – that you answered that knowing you are overweight or even obese. The rate at which we have piled

on the kilos has doubled over the past two decades to a point where we are a world leader among developed nations when it comes to obesity. Even our children are too fat, with 25 per cent between five and 17 years considered overweight or obese.

What has happened over the past few decades to get us to this point? While there is no single answer, a combination of factors has contributed to the problem. These include, cheaper, accessible and more energy-dense packaged foods; increased processing of foods and development of unhealthy ingredients such as trans-fats; an increasingly sedentary lifestyle and, crucially, increased portion sizes.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The small size of McDonald's French fries used to be the standard size
- The size of dinner plates has increased overall in the last 20 years
- The average adult eats around 30 per cent more energy than they use
- Disneyland had to increase the size of the boats and the depth of the channels because people are so much larger that the boats were getting stuck.



It's scary stuff, but the good news is that the solution is in your hands, and it's simple (although not necessarily easy) – reduce your portions!

"We need to re-educate ourselves as to portion size," observes UK nutritional expert Dr Ian Campbell. "When you actually measure your calorie intake it can make a huge difference to weight loss and prevention of disease."

Dr Campbell was in Australia recently to promote The Diet Plate, a simple plate/bowl combination which demonstrates what foods people should eat in the right proportions.

The plate has proved to be an effective tool in both weight loss and disease prevention (the University of Calgary showed it helped control Type 2 Diabetes in clinical trials) and in re-educating people about how much they should eat.

Dr Campbell says it's important to limit protein and carbohydrate intake and in general increase the consumption of vegetables.

"In some cases people using the Diet Plate have been quite shocked by the big gulf between what they have consumed and what they should consume," Dr Campbell says. "They've also discovered that when they eat foods in the right balance, with

lots of vegetables, the body sends the right signals to the brain so even though portion size is reduced, they are not feeling hungry."

Dr Campbell says research has shown that eating with a knife and fork, at the table with friends and family rather than in front of the television, and putting down your cutlery between bites, also has a positive impact on the amount of food consumed.

Of course, you can exercise portion control at any time, even without a specially marked plate. It's a matter of being aware of what the appropriate portions are. The following examples should help. Compare these with what you normally serve:

Ingredient	Portion (before cooking)	Looks like (after cooking)
Rice	¼ cup	Half an orange
Pasta	70 grams	One large handful
Red meat	115 grams	Deck of cards
Cheese	40 grams	Box of matches
Fish	115 grams	Cheque book
Chicken	115 grams	Deck of cards
Bread	1 slice – choose grain or wholemeal	
Apple	1 medium	
Vegetables	Should make up half of your dinner meat	Approx half a dinner plate
Potato	115 grams	Computer mouse
Milk	1 cup	Choose low fat
Ice cream	1 cup	Muffin



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