

## concept

Introduce children to the benefits and process of selecting healthy food portions and encourage family support for these healthier choices.

# Be Wise About Your Portion Size



## goals

1. Children are introduced to the concept of serving sizes as they relate to the USDA 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Child Care Food Program Meal Pattern for Children.
2. Children are made aware of their physiological hunger cues.

## objectives

1. Children recognize the various sizes of serving utensils.
2. Children demonstrate serving themselves using spoons, ladles, Spoodles®, or scoops (child size).
3. Children identify hunger cues.
4. Children learn to choose healthy portion sizes.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- *Eating Well* by Melanie Mitchell (if you feel that this book is too advanced for the children, choose to read specific pages that they will understand best)
- A balloon
- *Be Wise about Your Plate!* coloring sheet (included)
- Non-toxic crayons
- Serving utensils of various sizes. Choose 1 type of utensil from this list, in 2 different sizes: ladles, Spoodles®, or scoops
- Disposable child-size forks or spoons (1 for each child)
- Paper plates (1 for each child)
- Foods required to practice serving activity. Choose 1 or 2 foods from this list: sliced fresh, frozen, or canned fruit; pasta salad; cooked macaroni noodles (shell or elbow); or rice
- *Food Portions* pictures (included)

## activities

**1** Have the children gather in a circle or group on the floor. Begin by discussing the importance of mealtime and say, "Every day we sit together and eat breakfast, lunch, and snack. When we come together to eat we call it mealtime. Can you say, 'mealtime'?"

Congratulate the children for saying it correctly and continue by saying, "Mealtime is a special time for you to sit and enjoy eating. You can also talk to your friends or family about what you did during the day or new foods you want to try."

Encourage the children to share stories about eating at home and the things they like to talk about at mealtime. Continue with, "There is something else that is important about mealtime, we get to eat and feed our bodies! Our bodies are so important!"

Ask the children to stand up. Say, "Give your body a great big hug! Tell your body, 'Thank you!'">>>

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>>> Hug yourself and say in a loud happy voice, "Thank you, body!"

Rock your body sideways with a big smile on your face.

**2** Read the book *Eating Well*, by Melanie Mitchell. Afterwards ask the children, "How can we choose good foods?"

Allow the children an opportunity to respond and then discuss some of the ideas from the book. Continue by saying, "When you eat good food, your body is happy and full of energy, and you feel like going outside to run and jump. Your cheeks turn pink and your eyes light up."

Explain that when you are hungry and then you eat, your body takes what it needs for energy and growth, and it gets rid of whatever it doesn't need. Say, "When your body is hungry, it lets you know by making a growling noise like a lion."

Scrunch your face and growl like a lion, and ask, "Can you growl like a lion too? Say grrrrr. Have you ever heard your tummy do this? Sometimes your body lets you know you are hungry, and you may feel weak and tired."

With shoulders slouched and head facing the floor, mope around the room like you have no energy. While moping, say, "I feel really tired. I may need to eat something so that I can have energy to run and play."

Have the children mope around the room like they are tired and don't have any energy.

**3** Say, "When you eat too much, you might feel like you have a watermelon in your stomach! Yuck! When you eat too much sugar, your body has a hard time relaxing at night and you might not be able to sleep even when you are tired."

Show the children a balloon and gradually fill it with water to demonstrate the idea of the stomach filling with food as we eat. Be sure not to let the balloon pop.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Balloons can be choking hazards, please store and dispose of properly.

**4** Next, have the children move to an open area where they can do the "Wiggle Worm Workout." Enthusiastically say, "Let's all dance and wiggle to the 'Wiggle Worm Workout!'"

Exaggerate your movements as you sing, and have the children sing and dance to the "Wiggle Worm Workout."

"When wiggle worms feel lazy, they yawn and wiggle slow

When wiggle worms feel happy, they wiggle fast and go!

When wiggle worms feel hungry, they sit right down to eat

When wiggle worms feel tired, they lay down to sleep."

(Repeat)

Say, "Let's all wiggle back to our seats to learn about serving sizes of different foods."

**5** Prior to starting the next activity, make copies of the *Be Wise about Your Plate!* coloring sheet (included) and provide each child with a copy and crayons to color. While the children are coloring, arrange the foods and serving utensils needed for the children to practice serving themselves. Provide various serving utensils (spoons, forks, ladles, Spoodles®, or scoops) in different sizes for the children to use, and enough paper plates for each child and adult. Foods selected should be easy for the children to scoop. For example: sliced fresh, frozen, or canned fruit; pasta salad; cooked macaroni noodles (shell or elbow); or rice.

**6** Have the children remain where they're sitting or designate another table for the serving activity. You can determine if the children should stand around the table to participate or if it would be better to call them up individually, or in groups of two or four. This can be determined based on the table area and the ability to keep the children's attention.

## Be Wise About Your Portion Size

**7** Begin by holding up two different sizes of serving utensils (spoons, ladles, Spoodles®, or scoops) and say, "Which one of these is smaller? Which one do you think holds less food?"

Hold up the smaller one and say, "Yes. Good job. This one is smaller."

Continue, "I'm going to take a serving of food. If I were very hungry, I would use the bigger one to get the food."

Hold up the larger utensil for the children to see again and say, "But I'm not very hungry right now, so I will use the smaller one to get the food."

Hold up the smaller utensil for the children to see again, take a serving of food, and put it on a child's plate.

**8** Say, "Now it's your turn to serve yourselves. Think about how hungry you are and choose one of the serving utensils. Remember, if you're not very hungry, you may want to choose a smaller one."

Continue, "Take only one scoop (this is to ensure there is enough food for each child to have a turn)."

Pass out forks or spoons and tell the children they may begin to eat, reminding them, "When your tummy is full, it's okay to stop eating, even if you haven't eaten all the food on your plate."

**9** Once the children are finished with the serving activity have them sit back down on the floor. Using the food portion pictures (included), hold up the first picture of the owl and say, "This is the Be Wise Owl. When I look at him he reminds me that I need to 'Be Wise About My Portion Size!' Look, he has a serving utensil too!"

Explain what a portion size is and say, "A portion size is the right amount of a food we should eat."

Then tell the children to look at the different pictures of food portions. Hold up a picture of French fries and point to the smaller portion and then to the larger portion. Give the children an opportunity to see that one is smaller than the other, and then ask the children which picture looks like a healthier portion. For example, as you point to the smaller portion say, "The smaller serving of French fries is a better choice than the big one. There is still a lot (emphasize a lot) of French fries in the smaller package for you to eat and also share with someone else."

Place your hand on your stomach and say, "The big portion would be too much for us to eat!"

This is a good opportunity to reinforce that some foods like fruits and vegetables are usually alright to have a little more of because they are good for you. Once all the children have had an opportunity to compare the rest of the food portions pictures, smile and congratulate them for doing a wonderful job and say, "I am so proud of all of you because you've learned to 'Be Wise About Your Portion Size' just like the Be Wise Owl!"

Remember to make copies of the parent letter with the take-home activity sheet printed on the reverse side to send home with each child. The community fact sheet is also included for you to copy and display at your center or distribute as appropriate.

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## goals

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## MATERIALS NEEDED

- *Eating Well* by Melanie Mitchell (if you feel that this book is too advanced for the children, choose to read specific pages that they will understand best)
- A balloon
- Paper plates (1 plate for each child)
- Non-toxic crayons
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- Serving utensils. Choose 1 type of utensil from this list, in 2 different sizes: ladles, Spoodles®, or scoops
- Disposable child size forks or spoons (1 for each child)
- Foods required to practice serving activity. Choose 1 or 2 foods from this list: sliced fresh, frozen, or canned fruit; pasta salad; cooked macaroni noodles (shell or elbow); or rice

## activities

**1** Have the children gather in a circle or group on the floor. Begin by discussing mealtime and say, "Every day we sit together and eat breakfast, lunch, and snack. When we come together to eat, we call it mealtime. Mealtime is a special time for you to eat and if you want, you can talk to your friends. Mealtime is important at home too, because you can talk to your family about all sorts of things."

Encourage the children to share stories about eating at home and the things they like to talk about at mealtime. Continue, "There is something else that is important about mealtime, we get to eat and feed our bodies! Our bodies are so important!"

## Be Wise About Your Portion Size

**2** Read the book *Eating Well*, by Melanie Mitchell. Afterwards ask the children, "How can we choose good foods?" Allow the children an opportunity to respond, and then discuss some of the ideas from the book.

Continue by asking, "When you eat good food, your body is happy and full of energy, and it makes you feel like going outside to run and jump. Your cheeks turn pink and your eyes light up."

Explain that when you are hungry and then you eat, your body takes what it needs for energy and growth, and it gets rid of whatever it doesn't need. Say, "When your body is hungry, it lets you know by making a growling noise like a lion."

Scrunch your face and growl like a lion and ask, "Can you growl like a lion too? Say grrrrr. Have you ever heard your tummy do this? Sometimes your body lets you know you are hungry, and you may feel weak and tired."

With shoulders slouched and head facing the floor, mope around the room like you have no energy. While moping, say, "I feel really tired. I may need to eat something so that I can have energy to run and play."

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Show the children a balloon and gradually fill it with water to demonstrate the idea of the stomach filling with food as we eat. Be sure not to let the balloon pop.

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**4** Next, have the children move to any area where they can do the "Wiggle Worm Workout." Read or sing these verses. Enthusiastically say, "Let's all dance and wiggle to the "Wiggle Worm Workout!"

Exaggerate your movements as you sing, and have the children sing and dance to the "Wiggle Worm Workout."

"When wiggle worms feel lazy, they  
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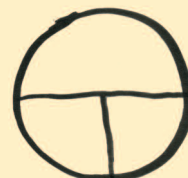
(repeat)

Say, "Let's all wiggle back to our seats to learn about serving sizes of different foods."

**5** Prior to this activity, arrange to have a stack of white paper plates and enough crayons for all of the children to have a selection. If possible, have a chart or poster of all of the different food groups on a wall in the room for children to see and refer to. Next, have the children move to a table. Sitting at the table with the children, hand a plate to each child and say, "Watch me draw a big T with a crayon."

If the children are not familiar with the letter T the teacher can make the lines for the child (this can be a good opportunity to teach them about the letter T). Draw a line across the plate from one side to the other. Draw the line and hold up the plate so the children can see the line. Then tell the children, "Now, take your crayon and put it on the middle of the line you just drew and draw a line down to the edge of the plate. It will look like a big T."

This may be hard to explain to the children, so you may need to show the children how to draw the lines. The following diagram represents one half of the plate and two quarter sections.



## Be Wise About Your Portion Size

**6** After the children have drawn lines on their plate, say, "Let's look at our plates."

While holding a divided plate, point and say, "The lines divide the plate into parts. There is one large part and it is called, 'half of the plate.' This can be hard to remember so don't worry if you don't remember it right away. This is the largest part of the plate."

Ask the children, "Can you pick up your plate and point to that part of the plate so I can see that you understand what I am talking about? Wow, that's great!"

Continue by saying, "Let's pretend this is a plate you eat on. In the largest part of the plate is where all of our yummy fruits and vegetables go."

Then tell the children to draw all the fruits and vegetables they like to eat in the largest part of the plate. After this, ask the children to hold up their plates. As the children are holding their plates up, walk around and praise each child individually for their drawings. Continue by pointing to the two smaller parts of the plate and say, "Show me the two smaller parts of the plate. Pick one of those smaller parts, now you can draw your favorite meat in that area. This is how much meat you should eat at mealtime."

**7** Talk about grains and breads with the children and explain by saying, "The last section of the plate is the same size as the meat section but this one is for grains. This includes foods like bread, noodles, rice, and cereal. Draw your favorite grain that you like to eat in this part of the plate."

**8** You can choose to end the activity by saying, "Remember that you don't have to eat everything that is on your plate. You should stop eating when your tummy is full."

Make sure that the child's name is on the back of his or her plate. Display the colored plates so that they are visible to the children and they can refer to them later.

**9** Prior to starting the next activity, make copies of the *Be Wise about Your Plate!* coloring sheet (included) and provide each child with a copy and crayons to color. While the children are coloring, arrange to have the foods and serving utensils needed for the children to practice serving themselves. Provide various serving utensils (spoons, forks, ladles, Spoodles®, or scoops) in different sizes for the children to use, and enough paper plates for each child and adult. Foods selected should be easy for the children to scoop. For example: sliced fresh, frozen, or canned fruit; pasta salad; cooked macaroni noodles (shell or elbow); or rice.

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Hold up the smaller one and say, "Yes. Good job. This one is smaller."

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Hold up the larger utensil for the children to see again and say, "But I'm not very hungry right now, so I will use the smaller one to get the food."

Hold up the smaller utensil for the children to see again, take a serving of food, and put it on your plate.



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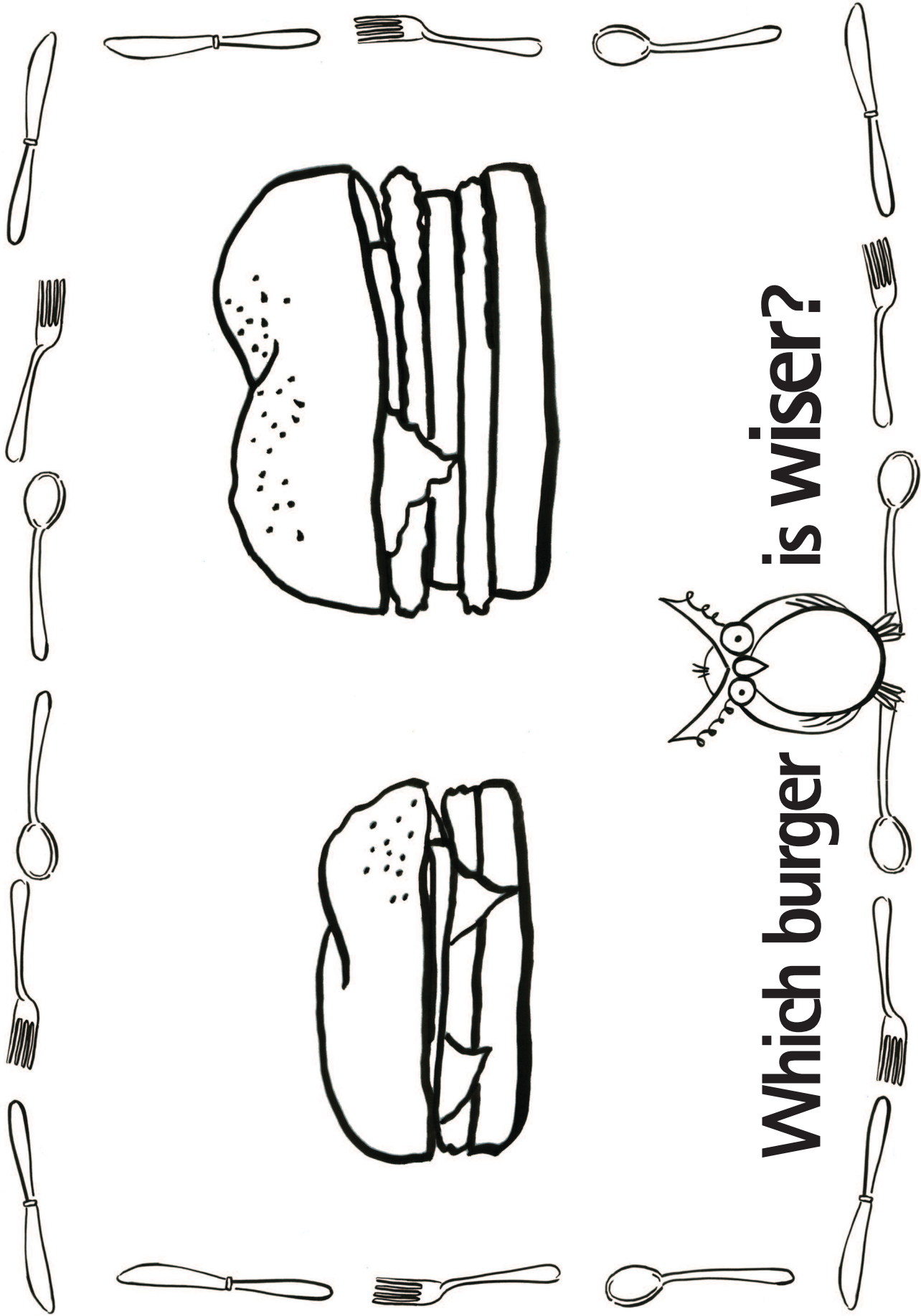
**12** Say, "Now it's your turn to serve yourselves. Think about how hungry you are and choose one of the serving utensils. Remember, if you're not very hungry, you may want to choose a smaller one."

Continue, "Take only one scoop (this is to ensure there is enough food for each child to have a turn)."

Pass out forks or spoons and tell the children they may begin to eat, reminding them, "When your tummy is full, it's okay to stop eating, even if you haven't eaten all the food on your plate."

Once all the children have participated in the serving activity, smile and congratulate them for doing a wonderful job and say, "I am so proud of all of you because you've learned to 'Be Wise About Your Portion Size' just like the Be Wise Owl!"

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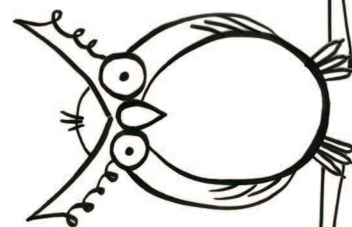
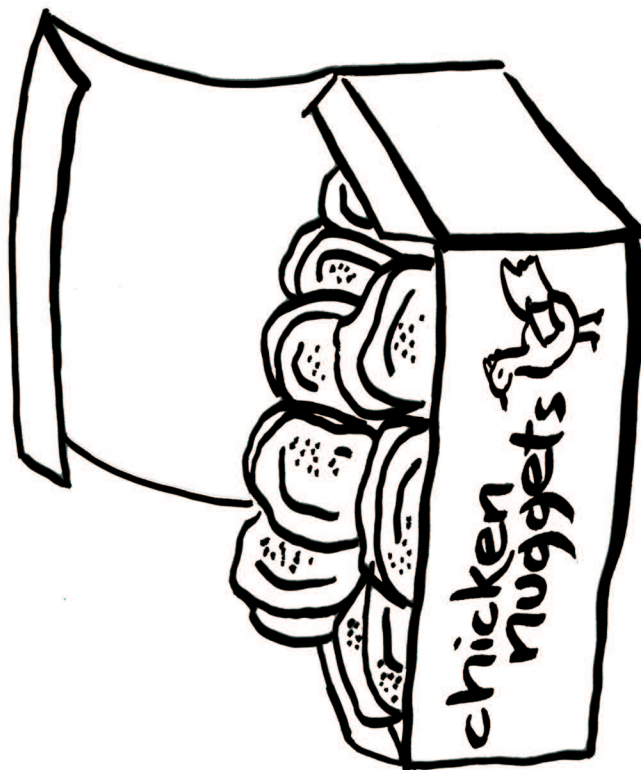


**Which portion of**



**fries is plenty?**

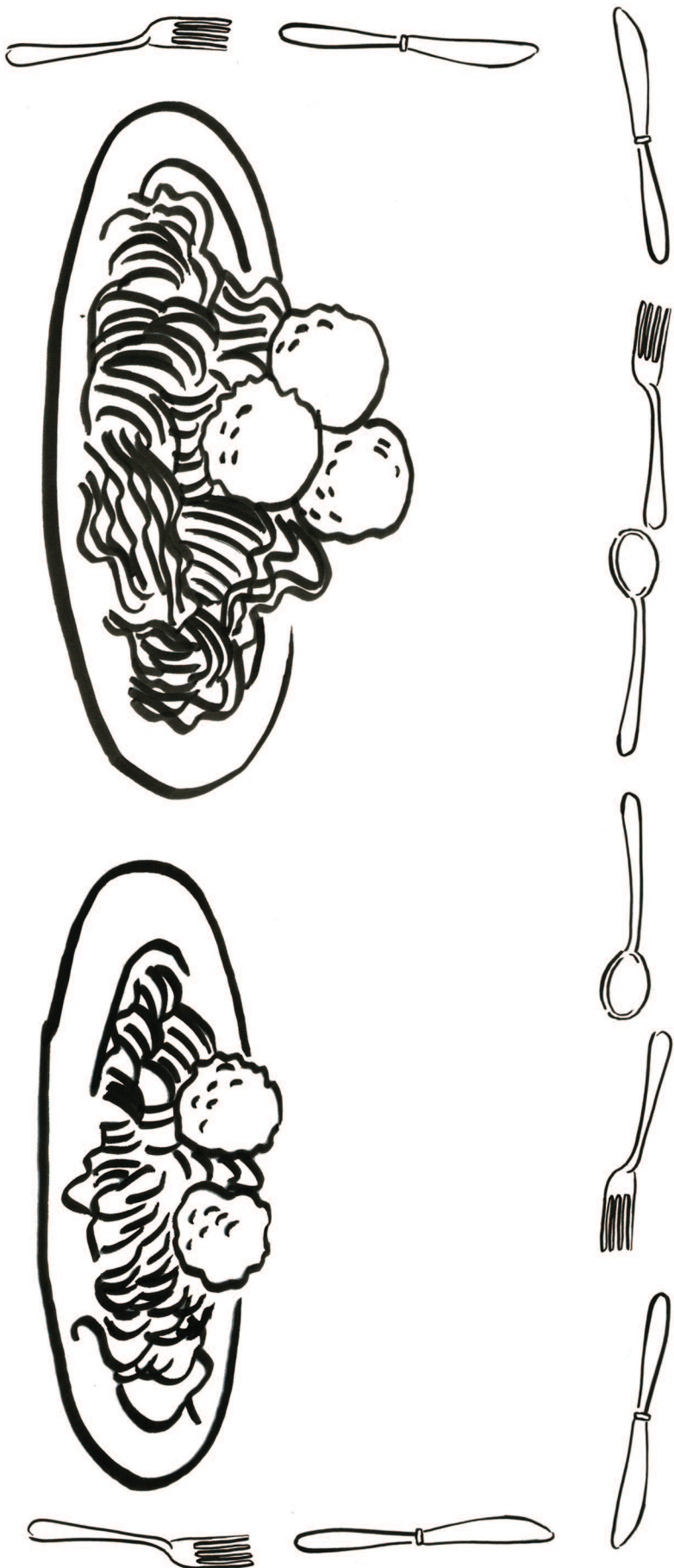




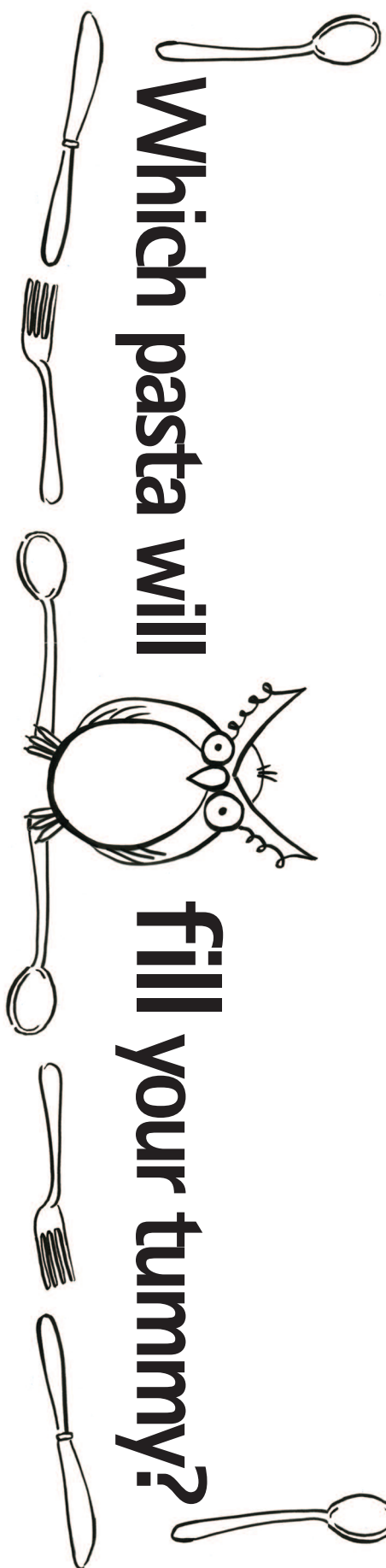
Which nuggets

are smarter?





**Which pasta will**



**Fill your tummy?**





Milk: lowfat  
or fat-free  
for children 2  
and older

Meat and Beans

Fruit

Vegetables

Grains

Be Wise about Your Plate!



Dear Parent:

Your child has been learning about choosing healthy food portions and how they should relate to hunger from our lesson, *Be Wise About Your Portion Size*. We have been focusing on the importance of listening to our bodies and eating the right amount of food to satisfy us.

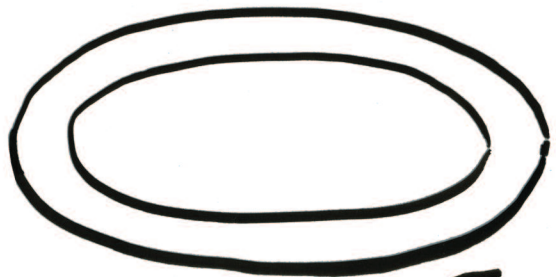
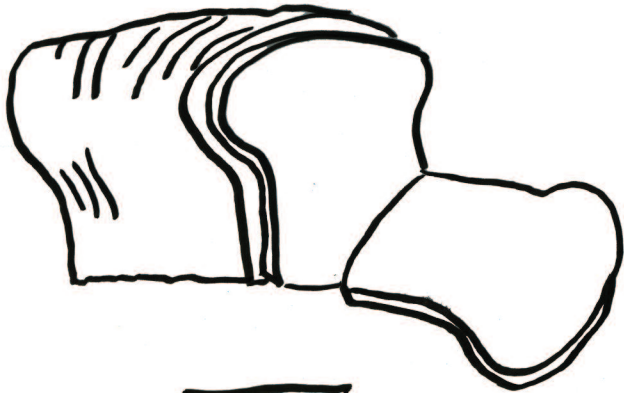
Your child participated in a serving activity and had the opportunity to use different serving utensils to serve a healthy portion of food. Children learn through repetition, the lessons learned in the classroom can be practiced at home too. We know that eating the right amount of good food (healthy fruits and vegetables) encourages healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime. Let your kids serve themselves at dinner. Teach them to take small amounts at first. Tell them they can get more if they're still hungry.

We can encourage children to eat when they are hungry and stop eating when they are satisfied. When an infant is born they possess a natural sense of knowing how much to eat. Sometime during our childhood, we lose that ability and we learn to "clean our plates" when we eat or to satisfy emotions by eating. As role models, we want to reinforce healthier behaviors. Children who develop healthy eating habits at a young age are more likely to keep them through their lifetime.

Turn the page over and help your child with the activity on the back.

Sincerely,

**Draw a line** from the food to the tableware or utensil that serves it.





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# What's the Difference Between a Serving and a Portion?

Curious about the difference between a serving and a portion? A "serving" is a unit of measure set by the U.S. government (or by others for recipes and diet plans) through two standards: the Nutrition Facts label printed on food packages, cans or bags, and MyPlate. When you stick to recommended serving sizes it is easier to maintain or lose weight.



A "portion" can be any size—think of it as the amount you choose of a specific food. Portions can be smaller or larger than the recommended food servings. If your normal portion is larger than the recommended serving, you're probably eating too much.

It's important to eat the right amount of food. Eating the recommended serving helps decrease your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, birth defects, and some types of cancer.

## No Nutrition Facts label or MyPlate handy?

Because every food doesn't come with a nutrition label, or maybe you don't want to carry a copy of MyPlate everywhere you go, you should teach yourself how to visualize the serving size of food. An easy way to do this is to compare your portion to an object that represents a recommended serving.



3 ounces of lean meat,  
fish, or poultry =  
the size of a deck of  
cards



$\frac{1}{2}$  cup cooked pasta =  
the size of a small  
computer mouse



1 cup of cereal =  
the size of a baseball



$1\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of  
natural cheese =  
the size of four dice

# Be Wise About Your Portion Size

## references and resources

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3. Bronfenbrenner, U. & Morris, P. *The Ecology of Developmental Processes* (1998). In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology* (5th ed., Vol. 1): Theory. [Series editor: W. Damon]. Pp. 993–1028. NY: Wiley.
4. Kostelnik, M., Soderman, A., & Whiren, A. *Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum: Best Practices in Early Childhood Education* (3rd Ed.). NY: Prentice Hall, 2003.
5. Utah Department of Health/Cardiovascular Program, 5 Minute Energizers–Gold Medal Schools “Wiggle Worm Workout” 2006. Website:  
[www.kidsmusictown.com/childrenssongslyrics/actionparticipationmovement/wigglewormworkout.htm](http://www.kidsmusictown.com/childrenssongslyrics/actionparticipationmovement/wigglewormworkout.htm)