Publication: Arkansas Democrat-Gazette; Date: Monday, July 04, 2005; Section: Health & Fitness; Page:

FINDING FITNESS

Moderation in the cards, dice, hands

JAN GAUGHAN

Let's say you have a bagel in the morning. You skip lunch, then graze from a large bag of Nacho Cheesier Doritos in the afternoon. When you go out with friends for dinner later, you don't feel too bad about the monster plate of fettuccine, the Caesar salad and the basket of bread that come to your table, because, you think, "I've only had two things to eat today."

And I'm — uh, you're — gaining weight? Amazing.

Last time, I told you about dietitian Lisa R. Young's book The Portion Teller. Young thinks the reason we have so much trouble losing weight is that, while we understand principles like "everything in moderation," a bigger-isbetter consumer culture has distorted our sense of what moderation looks like. And we tend to eat in units: a bag of Doritos, a whole bagel.

These units are like our little projects. How many times have you had a heaping platter of food set in front of you in a restaurant and thought, "Now that is a huge plate of food" — and then set to work as if you were mowing the yard? Section by section, it must be done.

You may get miserably full, but champ that you are, you try to work through the pain.

Same with the bag of Doritos. Once you open it, you mine that bag until you're digging the last crumbs out of the corner.

Such a sense of completion.

This is what we're up against. So Young wants us to recondition ourselves to think of portion sizes — and thereby, stopping points — in terms of familiar objects such as a baseball, a CD, dice, a deck of cards and a walnut; or hands, fists, fingers and thumb tips.

Young would like very much for us to eat lots of fruits and vegetables. ("No one ever got fat from eating too many carrots!" she says, in italics.) She thinks we overdo it with grains, where our portion inflation tends to be most gross. She likes whole grains, and fiber. She likes low-fat dairy. She thinks we need to get used to smaller meat portions. And she knows we're going to eat some fats and sweets.

Picture these items on a plate: meat the size of a deck of cards. Fleshy white fish, a checkbook. Peanut butter in a dollop the size of a walnut. Butter or margarine, a postage stamp. Cheerios or oatmeal, a baseball. Rice or pasta, cooked, half a baseball. Ice cream, half a baseball. Hard cheese, four dice. A baked or sweet potato, a computer mouse.

Fruit juice or alcohol, a yogurt container. Apples, oranges, melons and other fresh fruits, cut or whole, a baseball. Nuts, dried fruits or granola, a golf ball. Pancakes or waffles, sliced cheese or sandwich meat, a CD. Bread, a CD case. (And think in 3-D; that bagel may be the diameter of a CD, but it's many times thicker; that's why a bagel is five grain servings, while a slice of bread is only one.) Cookies, two tea bags. Chocolate, one layer on your palm. Pie, a golf ball. Chips, half a baseball. Gravy, a walnut.

Or look at your hands: Meat the size of your palm. Flaky white fish the size of your hand. Mixed nuts, one layer on your palm. Starchy veggies and berries, a tight fist. Popcorn or cereal, two cupped hands or two handfuls. Cooked pasta, one rounded handful. Butter or oil, a fin gertip.

These are servings. How many calories in a serving is, of course, going to vary from food to food, but

if you get these general pictures in your mind of what a serving looks like, you're probably looking at eating a lot less than you do now.

A restaurant portion of meat the size of three decks of cards will give you three of your daily servings of meat — a day's worth. Knowing that, you can "budget" accordingly.

To get an idea of how many servings from each food group you need in a day, see mypyra mid .gov, the government's Web site; or Weight Watchers; or the American Heart Association; or the American Diabetes Association; or your county extension service; or your doctor.

Young herself has the following suggestions: **Nonstarchy vegetables:** Unlimited servings. This is essentially all vegetables except cassava, corn, peas, parsnips, plantain, potato (white or sweet), pumpkin, rutabaga, butternut squash and acorn squash; Young puts those with grains. So eat all the broccoli, spinach, asparagus, brussels sprouts, tomatoes, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, beets, green beans, eggplant, etc. that you want — so long as you don't deep-fry them or load them with olive oil, salt, sugar, butter and/or bacon or ham. Go for a variety of colors to take advantage of their different health benefits.

Fruit: 2 to 4 servings. (But if you're going to overeat, better cherries than candies.) Grains and those starchy vegetables listed above: 4 to 8 servings.

Fish, poultry, meat and meat alternatives: 2 to 3 servings. Meat alternatives include eggs, hummus, legumes such as beans, peas and lentils, soy or veggie burgers and tofu.

Dairy: 2 to 3 servings. Milk, cheese, yogurt — but not butter, sour cream or cream (see below).

Fat: 1 to 3 servings. Avocados, nuts, olives, seeds, tahini paste, oils, sour cream, cream, mayonnaise, butter, salad dressings.

Treats and sweets: 0 to 2 servings. Alcohol, cakes and cookies, pie, candy, ice cream, chips, regular soda pops, etc.

Copy editor Jan Gaughan's column appears every other week. E-mail her at jgaughan@arkansasonline.com





Democrat-Gazette/STEPHEN B. THORNTON **A CD equals** one waffle; a die equals a quarter serving of cheese; the baseball can help estimate oatmeal, ice cream, pasta. The deck of cards? Meat.