

A City of Overeaters? Watch out for Portion Distortion!

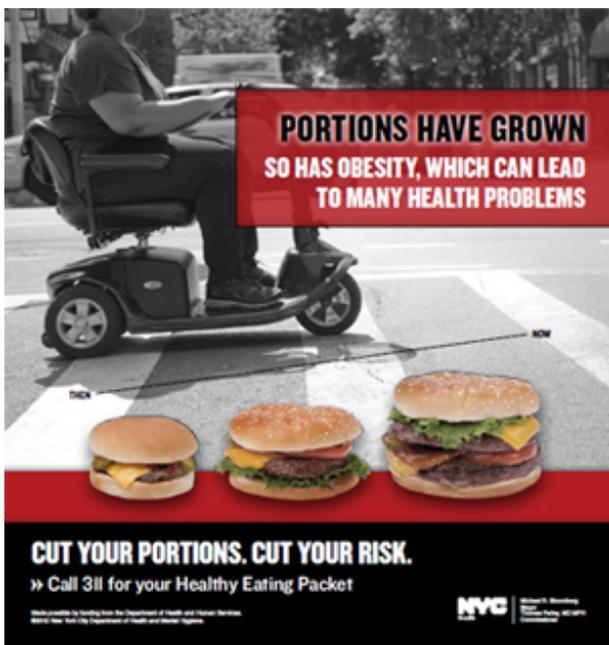
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by *Katy Mitchell-Gilroy*

It seems normal that a large soda at a restaurant might be 44 ounces (for reference, a quart is 32 ounces!), a muffin might be as large as a grapefruit or pancakes might be as large as a dinner plate!

But it wasn't always this way. In fact, looking at how much meals have increased in size over the years, I would say we're in a full-blown era of "Portion Distortion"!

I'm not the only one who thinks this. New York City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recently launched a new subway ad campaign to bring attention to the impact this trend has had on our general health.



Portions have grown - Cut your portions and reduce your risk of obesity.

will consume more calories while underestimating the amount of food they've actually eaten. This is a perfect recipe for weight gain and other obesity related illness. With so many people overweight already, this increase in portion size is a real health concern – which is why teaching people how to recognize the right portion size is part of all of our nutrition education work.

In fact, recent Centers for Disease Control [obesity statistics](#) for New York City indicate that 58 percent of adults living in the city are overweight or obese (BMI 25+). In 2009, a [data brief](#) from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene revealed that child obesity rates in the five boroughs are higher than the national average - 22 percent are obese and 19 percent are overweight in contrast to 17 and 14 percent nationwide.

So just how good are you at spotting "Portion Distortion"? Check out this [interactive quiz](#) from the National Institutes of Health, and see how you score – then try to watch out for portion sizes in your daily life. We'd love to hear what you find – let us know in the comments!

Soda sizes (in the news recently due to Mayor Bloomberg's proposal of a 16-ounce maximum size for sugar-sweetened beverages at food service establishments) used to be much smaller. A large cola used to be 16 ounces and approximately 200 calories. If you're extra thirsty and want to order a large cola today, be prepared for 32 ounces and a whopping 400 calories! And what is today's "small" cola? Yesteryear's large! 16 ounces and 200 calories. Surely some of our readers are in the camp that try to avoid sugary drinks overall, but this is just one example of increased portion sizes, and it impacts much more than sugar sweetened beverages. Are you try to eat healthfully and having a Chicken Caesar salad for lunch? 20 year ago, a Chicken Caesar salad was approximately 1 ½ cups and provided 390 calories. That same Chicken Caesar Salad today is 3 cups but it has 790 calories.

Why does this matter? If someone isn't aware of proper portion sizes (and many of us aren't), they

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