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Do Serving Sizes Impact How Much We Eat?



If the serving size for ice cream were to jump from 1/2-cup to 1-cup, would you eat more? Some experts are worried you might.

Among the proposed changes to the FDA Nutrition Facts label is the issue of recalculating serving sizes to reflect real-life consumption. In most cases, serving sizes would increase—ice cream and soft drinks are two products that would be affected. For example, those two servings in a 20-ounce bottle of soda would now be counted as one, since consumption data consistently shows people generally consume almost all, if not everything, of what's in front of them. According to the FDA, "By law, serving sizes must be based on how much food people actually consume... not on what they should eat."

This could be problematic given that more than half of consumers interpret "serving size" as a recommendation of how much they should eat or drink. This is concerning to the Behavioral Science and Regulation Group, a collection of students and fellows at Harvard who told Food Navigator that while the changes may be "appropriate," this "could lead [consumers] to eat more than they need, one risk would... because these consumers believe that the FDA has implicitly endorsed these serving sizes."

- See more at: <http://blog.myfitnesspal.com/2014/06/17/do-serving-sizes-impact-how-much-you-eat/#sthash.e4QsG65Z.dpuf>

READ MORE AT THE JUICE BAR

July 2014 | Blog.MyFitnessPal.com | Elle Penner, M.P.H., R.D. | Nutrition, Portion Control

NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with PROJECT: PFC's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.

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The American Diabetes Association has urged the FDA, "to conduct consumer education to ensure these changes... are not misunderstood by consumers as recommendations to consume larger portions." Consumer education campaigns could mean big bucks though. One alternative proposed by the Behavioral Science and Regulation Group could offer a simpler solution. "We suggest that the word 'serving' and the phrase 'serving size' be changed to avoid an implied endorsement. Changing 'serving' to a word that does not suggest the context of a meal, like 'unit' or 'quantity,' may mitigate the endorsement effect." For example, rather than "Serving Size: 20 fluid ounces", the Nutrition Facts Label on a soda bottle might read, "Quantity: 20 fluid ounces."

The proposed changes are currently open for public comment through August 1. Once the final changes have been agreed upon, food manufacturers will have 2 years to switch to the updated label.

[COOL INFOGRAPHIC ON THE OTHER SIDE!]

FOOD SERVING SIZES GET A REALITY CHECK

Serving Size Changes

What's considered a single serving has changed in the decades since the original nutrition label was created. So now serving sizes will be more realistic to reflect how much people typically eat at one time.

CURRENT SERVING SIZE



PROPOSED SERVING SIZE



Packaging Affects Servings

Package size affects how much people eat and drink. So now, for example, both 12 and 20 ounce bottles will equal 1 serving, since people typically drink both sizes in one sitting.



1 SERVING PER BOTTLE
FOR EITHER BOTTLE SIZE



FDA