

Portion size of campus takeaway foods and serving size estimates of common foods

DH Volker¹, C Leary¹, TP Gill²

¹*Human Nutrition Unit, University of Sydney, NSW 2006*

²*Centre for Public Health Nutrition, University of Sydney, NSW 2006*

Background: Advertised meal deals are increasing in size, the average Australian is increasing in size and consumers appear to have lost the ability to judge appropriate food portion size.

Objective: To investigate portion size of foods from on campus food outlets, takeaway outlets and supermarkets compared with the unspecified serve values of the National Nutrition Survey (1995) and the ability of consumers to judge appropriate food portion size from bulk food.

Design: In the serving size study 58 foods were purchased from supermarkets, takeaway and university food outlets. The weight in grams of these purchased foods was compared with the 'unspecified serve' size of the most appropriate food. The estimation of portions size study recruited 100 subjects; 50 dietitians and 50 non-dietitians who estimated standard portions from a variety of bulk food supplies.

Outcomes: In total, 86% of the purchased foods weighed greater than the unspecified serve, with a total of 39% being more than double the weight. Twelve percent of the total products purchased weighed less than the equivalent unspecified serve. There were significant differences between the mean estimations made by both dietitians and non-dietitians and unspecified serves, for most bulk items.

Conclusion: This research confirms that people lack the ability to estimate appropriate portion sizes from bulk food items. The larger portion sizes produced by the food industry may have an impact on the community's knowledge of appropriate quantities of food to eat. These factors could well be contributing to the increases in the rates of overweight and obesity in society.