



## Plate, utensil size tends to influence portions

People unknowingly eat more when given a bigger bowl, researchers find  
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NEW YORK - Want to lose weight? Try eating off smaller plates. A new study shows that using smaller bowls and spoons may curb the amount of food eaten.

"People could try using the size of their bowls and possibly serving spoons to help them better control how much they consume," write researchers in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

"Those interested in losing weight should use smaller bowls and spoons, while those needing to gain weight — such as the undernourished or aged — could be encouraged to use larger ones," add Dr. Brian Wansink, of Cornell University, and colleagues.

In a prior study, researchers found that teenagers poured 77 percent less juice into tall narrow glasses than they did into short wide glasses. Similarly, in another study, Philadelphia bartenders were found to pour less liquor into "highball" glasses than they did into tumblers. These studies suggest that individuals may adjust their serving portions depending on the size of their bowls or spoons.

To investigate, Wansink and his team conducted a study of 85 nutrition experts, including faculty, staff, and graduate students, from a large midwestern university, who attended an ice cream social. They were randomly given a 17 ounce or 34 ounce bowl along with a 2 ounce or 3 ounce ice cream scoop and allowed to serve themselves ice cream.

Afterwards, their ice cream was weighed while they completed a short survey about how much ice cream they thought they had served themselves and how the size of their bowl and spoon differed from what they normally used.

Study participants who received the larger bowls unknowingly served themselves 31 percent more ice cream than did those with smaller bowls. Ice cream servings also increased by 14.5 percent among those with larger serving spoons, regardless of the size of the bowl. And nearly all of the adults (82 of 85) ate all of their ice cream.

Altogether, those with large bowls and large serving spoons served themselves — and ate — nearly 57 percent more ice cream than those with smaller bowls and spoons, the team reports.

"What is critical to note, however, is that people — even these nutrition experts — are generally unaware of having served themselves more," write the authors.

"The fact that even they end up being tripped up by these cues just helps to show how ubiquitous and how subversive these illusions can be," Wansink said in a statement.

Based on the findings, "obese patients may want to use smaller bowls and spoons at home to reduce over-consumption," according to Wansink and his colleagues.

Among undernourished individuals, on the other hand, "larger bowls and spoons would encourage more food intake than the smaller bowls and spoons that are often provided," they conclude.