

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **ACTIVELY MANAGING PORTION DISTORTION**

*Over almost a decade the prevalence (sexes combined) of overweight has increased from 10,5% to 18,2% (SANHANES 2012)*

October 2013: Statistics show that increasing numbers of South Africans are overweight or obese, with the problem at its worst among adult women and preschool children. South Africans are eating too much and they're eating the wrong foods. National Nutrition Week 2013, which runs from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> October, aims to educate South African's about portion size and choices, to change attitudes and habits so that people 'downsize' and reduce their health risk. 'Eat less – choose your portion with caution!' will be the central message for National Nutrition Week 2013.

The Association for Dietetics in South Africa (ADSA) have partnered with National Nutrition Week since the late 1990s to highlight important nutrition messages to South Africans. "In line with our continued efforts to support South African's in living healthier lifestyles and promote dietitians as the go-to experts for any nutrition advice, the issues around portion control are close to our hearts and something our dietitians deal with on a daily basis", says Maryke Gallagher (van Zyl), ADSA.

As portions have grown larger over the past decades, so have South Africans supersized, being hoodwinked into eating more than they need. Dietitian Celynn Erasmus refers to this trend as "portion creep" because it takes only an additional 1 000 kilojoules (240 calories) a day to gain about 10kg over a year. 1 000 kilojoules are equivalent to a 50g chocolate bar, a sparsely buttered bread roll, a small kiddies milkshake, a quarter of a tramezzini or a small portion of 10 chips.

Rather than using research statistics and health scares, which are all indicative of South African's excessive eating habits, dietitians are focusing on practical advice that can be used daily to control the amount of food children and adults consume.

Many South Africans eat food prepared by someone else more than we realise - be it eating out, using the cafeteria at work every day, having take-aways, dinner parties and lunch with family. Eating away from home is often difficult and means less control over the food that is available. According to the 2012 SANHANES report (South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey) 28.3% of South Africans eat outside the home every week.

Dietitian Karlien Smit says that people often overeat when there is a large selection of food available, like finger foods at cocktail parties, picnics and buffets. She

suggests dishing up a small plate of snacks and then moving away from the food, focusing instead on conversation with other guests.

According to Johannesburg-based dietitian, Cheryl Meyer, many people are not familiar with the appropriate serving sizes. “Everyone should test themselves every now and again – pour your usual bowl of cereal and then transfer it to a measuring cup!” She suggests always using smaller plates, bowls and glasses allowing for less food on the plate and encouraging better portion control. “And never eat out of the box – put your snack in a small bowl or other container or alternatively opt for single-serving treat.”

Supersizing is all around us. A coffee shop muffin can be equal to five slices of buttered bread and jam and provides almost 5000 kilojoules if served with a small portion of cheese, jam and a pad of butter. Sobering if you consider that an average adult woman that are inactive should consume only 6 400 kilojoules daily to maintain her weight. Even salads can be distorted. Although perceived as healthy, those with generous protein toppings and dressing can be equivalent to a restaurant main meal. Dietitian, Brigitte LeClercq suggests always asking for separate dressing, so you can control how much is used.

Celynn Erasmus says: “Sharing is caring – don’t buy into the idea that what the restaurant is serving you is an appropriate amount of food to eat as it is possible you are getting three to four servings at one meal. Most restaurant meals or take-aways can in fact be shared between two people.”

Rather than cutting out food groups and going on extreme deprivation diets, South Africans should learn to downsize when they eat out, but also at home, where they have complete control over portion sizes, cooking methods and the type of food they eat. Dietitian, Mariam Forgan suggests including water at every meal as the body confuses thirst with hunger. A tall glass before and a tall glass of water during the meal will make you feel fuller faster, avoiding over indulgence.

ADSA spokesperson, Maryke Gallagher’s top tips include: don’t cook more than what the family will eat otherwise everyone will have seconds and maybe thirds; eat slowly, so that you eat less; never place dishes of food on the table when having dinner and don’t keep unhealthy snacks somewhere visible – out of sight, out of mind!

Apart from using smaller plates and bowls, dietitian Jade Campbell suggests that lean protein portions should not be bigger than a deck of cards, carbohydrates the size of a tennis ball and fat the size of a dice – and don’t forget that half your plate should be filled with salads or vegetables!

*ENDS*

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Issued on behalf of:  
Issued by:  
Contact:

ADSA  
liquidlingo Communications  
Jackie Busch  
+27 21 424 1530  
[jackie@liquidlingo.co.za](mailto:jackie@liquidlingo.co.za)