

PERFECT PORTIONS

You might have the food groups right but how much food do you need? **Maya Anderson** reports.

Most people understand the food pyramid for a healthy diet but how much food do you need from each of these groups to eat right without overdoing it?

Dietitians Association of Australia spokeswoman Melanie McGrice said it could be difficult to know if you were eating the right serves and this was where the advice of an accredited practising dietitian could help. A dietitian could design a meal plan that incorporated all of the core food groups and show you tricks to eating more of the ones you needed.

"If you're not eating enough fruit, try putting some on top of your breakfast cereal," Ms McGrice said.

"Always serve vegetables or a side salad at lunch or dinner and try snacking on raw vegetables as a healthy snack throughout the day."

Perth Diet Clinic dietitian Peggy Stacy said replacing common unhealthy snacks with pieces of vegetables or fruit was a good way to meet the recommended dietary intake for these foods.

"It is better for your health and waistline to pick up a piece of fruit or vegetable than a cake or biscuit," she said. "Eat as many low-joule vegetables as possible with some fruit."

Diet By D'Zyne principal dietitian Jo-Anne Dembo said a common problem that plagued dieters was misunderstanding the proportions and serving up portions far in excess of what the body needed. Too much energy (kilojoules) would be stored as fat reserves in the body.

"Using smaller plates is one of the best strategies for limiting quantities served at mealtimes," Ms Dembo said.

Another weight-watching strategy was to eat a mouthful less each meal.

"A mouthful less each meal adds up to a huge saving of kilojoules," she said. "Adding a second serving to a particular meal daily will add seven meals to the diet by the end of the week. That's a lot of excess kilojoules."

MIX IT
Aim to eat 30 different foods each day to get the nutrients. Here's a tip: make a stir-fry for lots of coloured vegetables, meat for protein, oil for fat and bread for grain.

