



RUTGERS
New Jersey Agricultural
Experiment Station

Small Steps to Health and Wealth™

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Deskercise!

Whether you're praying for a project extension or for more defined arms, this move has you covered. Seated upright with feet flat on the floor, bring the palms together in front of the chest and push both hands together powerfully until you feel the arm muscles contract. Hold the prayer hands pushed together for 20 seconds. Release and repeat.

Healthy on the Job!
Small Steps to Health & Wealth
Workplace Newsletter

Family & Community Health Sciences
Rutgers Cooperative Extension



Strategy 11

Focus: Say "NO" to Super-Sizing

SAY "NO" to Super-Sizing

http://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/workbook/11_Say_NO_to_Super-Sizing.pdf

"Value marketing" is used to describe super-sized food portions. Instead of decreasing prices to attract consumers, the U.S. food industry has increased portion sizes and called them "meal deals." The cost of food is relatively low so that manufacturers can sell larger quantities for only pennies more.

Economically, larger portions seem like a "bargain" to consumers. What they are getting, however, is more fat, sugar, and calories. As portion sizes have gotten larger, two-thirds of Americans have become overweight or obese. When people eat more and move less, they put on weight, so more food for less money is not healthy.

A "bigger is better" mentality has also caused many people to lose perspective on what recommended portion sizes look like.

Super-size portions, such as 6.9-oz. French fries with 610 calories, compared to 2.4 oz. with 210 calories 20 years ago, are seen as "normal." Similar "more is better" (super-sizing) can also be found with non-food items as an enticement for consumers to spend money that might otherwise be invested for future financial goals. These include store coupons (e.g., "spend \$100 and get \$20 off"), paired discounts (e.g., "buy "X" and get

"Y" for half price"), and free item offers (e.g., "buy three of X and get one more free").

Like larger food portions, there is a major problem associated with marketing offers based on sales volume...debt. This is especially true if items are paid for with credit card minimum payments.

Average Americans with credit card debt are carrying about a \$15,000 balance on their credit cards. With an 18% annual percentage rate and low minimum payments, it will take decades to repay this debt. Carrying debt for decades has been referred to as "perma-debt" because the outstanding credit balance barely budges over time due to small payments toward principal and high interest charges.

Perma-debt can lead to financial distress and associated health problems such as anxiety and insomnia. Both super-sized eating and super-sized spending are dangerous practices.

According to the book *Fast Food Nation*, a woman who is 5'5" and weighs 132 pounds has a body mass index (BMI) of 22, which is considered normal. Body mass index is a health measure based upon both height and weight. If she gains 18 pounds, her BMI rises to 25 and she's considered overweight. If she gains 30 more pounds, her BMI reaches 30 and she is considered obese. Eating just 100 extra calories per day will result in a weight gain of 10 pounds per year, so excess weight can add up quickly.

Table 1, on page 2 shows how quickly BMI can change from a healthy range (BMI of 18.5 to 24.9) to overweight (BMI of 25 to 29.9) to obese (BMI of 30 to 39.9) to extremely obese (BMI of 40 or higher). Note that the BMI does not differentiate between fat and muscle, so a person with lots of

muscle, such as an athlete, may have a BMI in the unhealthy range but still be healthy. Also, the BMI may not be accurate for people who are less than 5 feet tall.

Similarly, household debt-to-income ratios, which include all consumer debts but not home mortgages, can increase quickly and spin out of control.

Let's say your take-home (after-tax) pay is \$3,000 monthly (about \$36,000 per year). If you owe a total of \$300 monthly on a car loan (\$220) and credit cards (\$80), your debt to-income ratio is 10% (300/3,000), which is within an acceptable debt-to-income range.

If monthly payments increase to \$450, because \$230 is owed on credit cards, the debt-to-income ratio is 15% (450/3,000) which financial experts agree is an indicator of financial difficulty. Increase the monthly payment further to \$600, with \$380 owed on credit cards, and the debt-to-income ratio increases to an even more dangerous 20% (600/3,000). This effectively means that you are working five days and getting paid for four because one day's pay is "spoken for."

Table 2 on the next page shows how quickly annual interest payments can rise with the double-digit annual percentage rates (APRs) so common on credit cards.



Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing.

— Abraham Lincoln

STRATEGY II

Health and Wealth Action Steps This Week



— TABLE 1 —

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Figures for Select Heights and Weights

Ht	120 lbs	150 lbs	180 lbs	210 lbs	240 lbs
5'0"	23	29	35	41	47
5'2"	22	27	33	38	44
5'4"	21	26	31	36	41
5'6"	19	24	29	34	39
5'8"	18	23	27	32	37
5'10"	17	22	26	30	35
6'0"	16	20	24	29	33

Health

Make a list of recent instances when you purchased a super-sized meal and indicate the reason why.

Estimate the changes in your weight each year during the past decade.

Calculate your body mass index (BMI) using the website

www.consumer.gov/weightloss/bmi.htm

Wealth

Make a list of recent instances when you purchased items with super-sized terms and indicate the reason why.

Estimate the changes in your outstanding debt balance each year during the past decade.

Calculate your debt-to-income ratio by dividing monthly consumer debt payments, excluding a home mortgage, by monthly take-home pay.

Super-Sizing Inventory—Diet

Super-Sized Foods Eaten	Caloric Value	Healthier Substitution / Smaller Size	Caloric Value	Calorie Savings

— TABLE 2 —

Annual Interest Payments on Various Credit Card Balances

APR	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$4,000	\$5,000
14%	\$140	\$280	\$420	\$560	\$700
15%	\$150	\$300	\$450	\$600	\$750
16%	\$160	\$320	\$480	\$640	\$800
17%	\$170	\$340	\$510	\$680	\$850
18%	\$180	\$360	\$540	\$720	\$900
19%	\$190	\$380	\$570	\$760	\$950
20%	\$200	\$400	\$600	\$800	\$1,000

Super-Sizing Inventory—Wealth

Super-Sized Item Purchased	Cost	Less Expensive Substitution Smaller Size	Cost	Dollar Savings

<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/sshw/>

More information on analyzing your plate and menu planning can be found at:

<http://healthfinder.gov/HealthTools/activity.aspx>

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/eat-right/distortion.htm>

http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/just_enough.htm

National Weight Control

Registry

<http://www.nwcr.ws/default.htm>

