PORTION CONTROL AND WASTE REDUCTION IN HEALTHCARE FOOD SERVICES

TOPIC:	Portion Control and Waste Reduction
AUDIENCE:	Food Service Workers
DATE:	[Enter Date]

Purpose / Why Does it Matter

Proper portion control and waste reduction are critical in healthcare food services because they ensure patients receive accurate nutrition as ordered, support therapeutic diets, improve patient satisfaction, and reduce food waste and operational costs. Over portioning or incorrect portioning can negatively affect patient health outcomes, increase food waste, and lead to unnecessary expense. Consistent portion control supports quality care, food safety, and sustainability.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this in-service, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of portion control in healthcare settings
2. Identify standard portion sizes for common menu items
3. Use correct portion control tools consistently and accurately
4. Recognize common causes of food waste
5. Apply strategies to reduce food and tray waste safely and appropriately

KEY INFORMATION

Portion Control in Healthcare

Portion control means serving the correct, standardized amount of food every time, as outlined in menu standards and recipes. Accurate portioning ensures patients receive the nutrition required for their medical condition and recovery.

Benefits of Proper Portion Control

- Supports therapeutic diets (e.g., diabetes, renal, texture modified)
- Prevents overfeeding or underfeeding
- Improves tray consistency
- Reduces unnecessary food waste
- Helps manage food costs

Standard Portion Sizes (Examples)

- Cooked meat or fish: 3 oz (85–90 g)
- Mashed potatoes, rice, or any starch: ½ cup
- Vegetables: ½ cup
- Soup: 6 oz (180 mL)
- Milk: 1 cup (250 mL)
- Portions must always follow facility portion guides and tray tickets.

Portion Control Tools

- Color-coded scoops
- Ladles with measured volumes
- Portion spoodles
- Scales for proteins
- Portion-specific dishes or bowls
- ⚠ Estimating or eyeballing portions is not acceptable.

Colour-Coded Portion Scoop Reference

Colour	Scoop No.	Approx. Capacity	Household Measure
White	#6	158 mL / 5⅓ fl oz	⅔ cup
Grey	#8	118 mL / 4 fl oz	½ cup
Ivory	#10	95 mL / 3⅕ fl oz	⅖ cup
Green	#12	79 mL / 2⅔ fl oz	⅓ cup
Blue	#16	59 mL / 2 fl oz	¼ cup
Yellow	#20	47 mL / 1⅗ fl oz	3⅕ tbsp
Red	#24	39 mL / 1⅓ fl oz	2⅔ tbsp
Black	#30	32 mL / 1⅕ fl oz	2⅛ tbsp
Orchid	#40	24 mL / ⅘ fl oz	1⅗ tbsp

Accuracy note: Scoop capacities shown are approximate and may vary by manufacturer, scoop style, product density, and how the scoop is filled. Before use, verify the scoop number and stated capacity against the manufacturer's specifications and the facility-approved portion guide or tray ticket; use a scale or calibrated measure when exact portions are required.

Food Waste in Healthcare

- Over-production
- Over portioning
- Incorrect tray assembly
- Late or cancelled trays
- Poor communication of diet changes
- Patient refusals
- Improper storage or labeling
- Even small errors can lead to significant waste over time.

Waste Reduction Strategies

During Preparation:

- Follow standardized recipes
- Avoid overproduction
- Practice First In, First Out (FIFO)
- Use trim appropriately were permitted

During Tray Assembly:

- Verify diet orders before plating
- Portion foods accurately
- Serve only items listed on tray tickets

During Service and Cleanup:

- Report repeated refused items
- Dispose of food according to policy
- Separate unopened packaged items for appropriate handling
- Communicate waste trends to supervisors

Documentation

- Production records
- Tray accuracy audits
- Waste logs

Patient-Centered Care

- Serving appropriate portions helps encourage intake
- Serving appropriate portions helps reduce overwhelming tray sizes
- Serving appropriate portions helps improve patient satisfaction
- Portion changes must not be made without approval.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____

1. Why is portion control important in healthcare food service?

☐ **A.** It makes trays look fuller

☐ **B.** It supports accurate nutrition and patient safety

☐ **C.** It saves dishwashing time

☐ **D.** It increases food production

2. The best way to ensure consistent portions is by:

☐ **A.** Estimating visually

☐ **B.** Using standardized portion control tools

☐ **C.** Serving extra food

☐ **D.** Changing portions as needed

3. Which of the following contributes most to food waste?

☐ **A.** Following recipes

☐ **B.** FIFO storage

☐ **C.** Over portioning

☐ **D.** Accurate tray assembly

4. If a patient tray is returned untouched due to discharge, staff should:

☐ **A.** Reserve it

☐ **B.** Save it for later use

☐ **C.** Follow disposal policy and inform supervisor

☐ **D.** Ignore it

5. Changing a patient's portion size without approval is:

☐ **A.** Encouraged

☐ **B.** Acceptable if patient asks

☐ **C.** Not allowed

☐ **D.** Required during busy periods

6. Portion control helps reduce food waste and costs.

☐ True

☐ False

7. Using the wrong scoop size can affect patient nutrition.

☐ True

☐ False

8. All unused food items can be reused safely.

☐ True

☐ False

9. Waste trends should be reported to management.

☐ True

☐ False

10. Portion control tools must be used as trained.

☐ True

☐ False

Knowledge Check Answer Key

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. C
5. C
6. True
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. True

DATE:	Date:
TRAINER NAME:	Trainer:

In-Service Attendee Sign-in

DATE:

ATTENDEE NAMES: