

# TheNational

## Large portions in restaurants contribute to obesity crisis

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DUBAI // Restaurants serving oversized portions of food may be increasing their patrons' risk of obesity, contributing to poor health among Emiratis, according to a dietician.

Some fast-food chains and restaurants served portions that by far exceeded the average person's nutritional requirements, resulting in many diners overindulging without realising it, said Fariba Shaikh, a registered dietician at the Chiropractic and Medical Centre.

"It's a major problem because people are not familiar with [nutritionally appropriate] portion sizes and often eat a lot," she said.

"It is okay to eat your favourite food, but you have to control the portions and you must become more physically active."

More than a third of Emiratis are considered overweight, and one child in eight is classified as obese.

Ameera Budebs, a 43-year-old Emirati, said that the majority of establishments served excessively large portions.

"It is not healthy, but this is what we are used to eating and restaurants are taking it into consideration," she said.

Restaurateurs admit that portions are large but insist that they are merely meeting the expectations of their customers.

Jinger Panganiban, the UAE marketing manager for the Chilis restaurant chain, said: "It varies between people because some will find it appropriate and some will find it large and share it."



Concern about portion sizes keeps some people out of local restaurants. Zofia Reid, a 41-year-old Polish expatriate, said she rarely dined out because the portions were too big and she often left half of the meal on her plate.

"I just wonder what it's going to cost me in medical bills in the future, or how much I need to work out in the gym to kill the hidden calories that were packed into the meal," she said.

When measuring portions, there are simple guidelines consumers can follow – a serving of vegetables or fruit is about the size of a woman's fist and a serving of poultry, meat or fish is about the size of a deck of cards.

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Added: 06/07/10 08:33:00 AM

I agree with James Cameroon. Please don't blame others for what you have put in your mouth without force. Whenever I dine in in a restaurant, if it's with a friend and the portion is too big, we would share, and if I dine alone, I simply ask the leftovers for a takeaway.

**Eve Wong, Abu Dhabi**

Added: 06/03/10 01:19:00 PM

It is normal practices to blame others for your mistakes, and that is what I read from this news. Blaming the restaurant for the large portion of the meal rather than blaming yourself for your eating behaviour. The restaurants have a business perspectives, how much the portion of the meal that valued to customer's money