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“My fries were the size of an iPhone[®]”: How portion size is reported in the Fuel 2 Fight study

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Abstract

Capturing portion size estimates is a constant challenge. Our objective was to characterize reported portion size during face-to-face and telephone 24-hour diet recalls among career fire fighters in the Fuel 2 Fight study. Trained nutritionists reviewed recalls and categorized reported portion size into weights, household measures, servings & items (including common alternatives for portion size), or food models. Two-dimensional models were most frequently used in face-to-face recalls, whereas household measures, and servings & items were more frequently used in telephone recalls. Thus, expanding use of common non-food objects with a known volume could be an important portion size alternative for telephone recalls.

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1. Introduction

Portion size estimation is challenging. Current portion size measurement aids (PSMA) include three dimensional models, two dimensional (2-D) models, household measures, food models, pictures, servings and common objects [1,2,3,4]. Food models with a known dimension and/or volume offer reliable estimates that can be easily converted to gram weights [5,6]. Individuals' frequency of use of different PSMA to describe their intake is not well described. As well, it is not known if PSMA use differs by recall method (e.g. face-to-face vs. telephone recalls). It is challenging to have PSMA available to facilitate telephone diet recalls when participants are free living and may provide a diet interview while

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away from their home or office. The objective of this brief report is to clearly describe the difference in frequency of use of PSMA between face- to-face and telephone interviews among career fire fighters participating in the Fuel 2 Fight longitudinal study assessing the nutritional environment of the fire service.

2. 2. Materials and Methods

The sample consists of 390 US fire fighters from the Fuel 2 Fight study. Of these, 381 were male (98%); the mean age was 39 years. The participants were asked to complete one face-to-face 24-hour dietary recall interview at the fire station and a second follow-up telephone interview on the fire fighters’ off duty day. A total of 389 (100%) completed a face-to-face interview and 320 (82%) completed a telephone interview, for 709 completed recalls.

Interviewers used multiple pass methodology and introduced fire fighters to the different methods to describe the quantity of intake during the face-to-face interview. They offered participants use of weight, household measures, 2-D food models, or servings & items (which included common alternatives for portion size (CAPS)) to describe the quantity of food consumed. CAPS is a reference sheet of common items such as mobile phones, balls, and a check book. Each object has a fixed size with dimensions identified (Figures 1-2). The authors developed CAPS with gram weights calculated for common foods associated with each different object. Gram weight information was utilized from the USDA Food and Nutrient Database for Dietary Studies [7]. Each respondent was given a copy of 2D food models to take home for the telephone recall. During the interview process, each respondent was allowed to self-initiate a method for describing the quantity of intake.






Meats and Beans		
	Blackberry without case	3 oz meat
	iPhone with case	4 oz meat
	Thickness of iPhone with case or Blackberry without case	
Fruits & Vegetables		
	Light bulb	½ cup grapes
	Ice cream scoop	½ cup

Fig.1.Excerpt of CAPS portion size tool for telephone 24-hour recalls

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