

Meal Planning

Ask yourself:

Do I regularly plan meals?

What challenges do I face when planning meals?

Why Plan Meals? Planning meals is a great way to become more involved in your food choices, and can help you save time and money. Meal planning is associated with:

- Cooking at home more frequently
- Less time constraints in making food decisions
- Better adherence to nutritional guidelines
- Higher intake and better variety of fruits and vegetables
- Lower risk of obesity
- Better attitudes towards healthy eating

Tips for Meal Planning:

- Spend time at the beginning of each week to plan meals
- Think about your schedule. Which meals can you prepare at home? Are there meals you may need to pack to work or school?
- Get others in your house involved
- Use recipes that call for similar ingredients throughout the week
- Prepare a grocery list

	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Snacks</i>
<i>Monday</i>				
<i>Tuesday</i>				
<i>Wednesday</i>				
<i>Thursday</i>				
<i>Friday</i>				
<i>Saturday</i>				
<i>Sunday</i>				

Grocery Shopping Tips

- Always make a grocery list.
 - Keep list in a central location, and update as you run out of items
 - Check pantry before adding to the list
 - Organize your list by food group or grocery store layout
- Stick to your list. Avoid shopping every aisle.
- Never go to the grocery store hungry
- Read food labels

Budget Friendly Grocery Shopping Tips

- Use coupons and rewards cards
- Download grocery store app
- Buy store brands
- Compare unit prices
- Buy on sale and in bulk
- Be careful not to buy more fresh produce than you will use
- Always check “sell by” and “best used by” dates
- Farmers’ Markets

Tips for Reading Nutrition Labels:

- Check serving size first
- The % Daily Values (%DV) are based on the Daily Value recommendations for key nutrients. A quick reference:
 - 5% DV or less is low for a nutrient
 - 20% DV or more is high for a nutrient
- Choose foods with <15 g total sugars per serving
 - <5% DV for added sugars

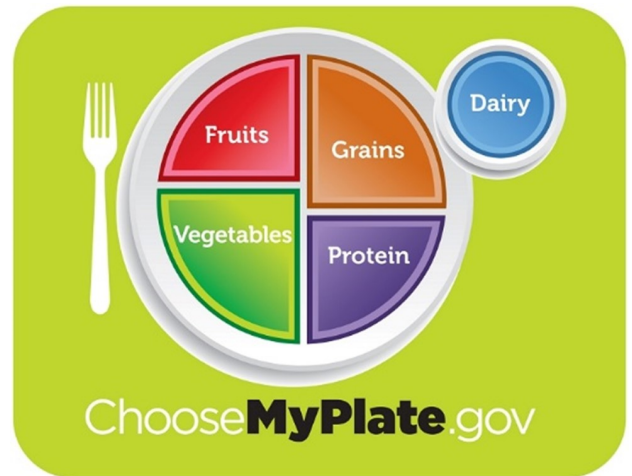
Tips for Meal Prep

- Consider setting aside time at the beginning of the week to prepare meals
- Slice fruits and vegetables ahead of time
- Batch cooking
- Crock-pot / slow-cooker recipes
- Multi-cooker
- Pack lunches and snacks the night before to save time on busy mornings
- Invest in reusable containers
- Put away leftovers immediately to save time, money, and calories
- Freeze extra portions

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
<small>* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

Ask yourself:

What does a balanced meal look like?



Fruits

- Aim for 1 1/2—2 cups per day
- Shopping Tips:
 - Fresh fruits in produce section—look for those in season for best taste and prices
 - Frozen fruits without added sugars
 - If choosing canned fruits, purchase in “100% juice” instead of syrup
- Tips to increase fruit intake:
 - Keep “in sight” in a bowl on tables and countertops for easy snacking
 - Prepare ahead for on-the-go snacks (slice, use bags/reusable containers, whole fruits)
 - Get creative! Add fruits to cereals, smoothies (1/2 cup), salads, meat dishes, grill at barbeque meals or have for dessert

Vegetables

- Aim for 2-3 cups non-starchy vegetables per day
- Make 1/2 of your plate vegetables
- Shopping Tips:
 - Fresh vegetables in produce section —look for those in season for best taste and prices
 - Consider prepared vegetables (bagged lettuce, cut-up celery, salad bar)
 - Frozen vegetables without added sauces or gravies
 - If buying canned vegetables, read labels and choose “reduced sodium”, “low sodium”, or “no salt added”
- Tips to increase vegetable intake:
 - Prepare ahead
 - Pre-slice raw vegetables at the beginning of the week for easy snacking (celery, cherry tomatoes, carrots, peppers, radishes, snap peas, cucumbers)
 - Keep salad greens on hand for a low-prep side or meal
 - Batch cook vegetables to last several meals (beets, squash, turnips, parsnips, eggplant, brussel sprouts)
 - Try cooking vegetables in new ways
 - Roasted, steamed, sautéed, riced, spiralized
 - Use new flavors – lemon, garlic, ginger, or your favorite herbs & spices
 - Get creative! Add vegetables to your favorite recipes.
 - Can add vegetables to stir-fry, casseroles, omelets, soups and stews, pasta dishes, pizzas, baked goods, and can grill at barbeque meals
 - Try adding peppers, onions, spinach, and mushrooms to your morning omelet
 - Opt for more veggies than high-fat meats and cheeses on a homemade pizza
 - Try grilled veggie kabobs at your next barbeque (zucchini, squash, cherry tomatoes)

Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

20 Ways to Enjoy More Fruits and Vegetables

Building a healthy plate is easy when you make half your plate fruits and vegetables. It's also a great way to add color, flavor and texture plus vitamins, minerals and fiber. All this is packed in fruits and vegetables that are low in calories and fat. Make 2 cups of fruit and 2 ½ cups of vegetables your daily goal. Try the following tips to enjoy more fruits and vegetables every day.

1. Variety abounds when using vegetables as pizza topping. Try broccoli, spinach, green peppers, tomatoes, mushrooms and zucchini.
2. Mix up a breakfast smoothie made with low-fat milk, frozen strawberries and a banana.
3. Make a veggie wrap with roasted vegetables and low-fat cheese rolled in a whole-wheat tortilla.
4. Try crunchy vegetables instead of chips with your favorite low-fat salad dressing for dipping.
5. Grill colorful vegetable kabobs packed with tomatoes, green and red peppers, mushrooms and onions.
6. Add color to salads with baby carrots, grape tomatoes, spinach leaves or mandarin oranges.*
7. Keep cut vegetables handy for mid-afternoon snacks, side dishes, lunch box additions or a quick nibble while waiting for dinner. Ready-to-eat favorites: red, green or yellow peppers, broccoli or cauliflower florets, carrots, celery sticks, cucumbers, snap peas or whole radishes.



8. Place colorful fruit where everyone can easily grab something for a snack-on-the-run. Keep a bowl of fresh, just ripe whole fruit in the center of your kitchen or dining table.
9. Get saucy with fruit. Puree apples, berries, peaches or pears in a blender for a thick, sweet sauce on grilled or broiled seafood or poultry, or on pancakes, French toast or waffles.
10. Stuff an omelet with vegetables. Turn any omelet into a hearty meal with broccoli, squash, carrots, peppers, tomatoes or onions with low-fat sharp cheddar cheese.
11. “Sandwich” in fruits and vegetables. Add pizzazz to sandwiches with sliced pineapple, apple, peppers, cucumber and tomato as fillings.
12. Wake up to fruit. Make a habit of adding fruit to your morning oatmeal, ready-to-eat cereal, yogurt or toaster waffle.
13. Top a baked potato with beans and salsa or broccoli and low-fat cheese.
14. Microwave a cup of vegetable soup as a snack or with a sandwich for lunch.
15. Add grated, shredded or chopped vegetables such as zucchini, spinach and carrots to lasagna, meat loaf, mashed potatoes, pasta sauce and rice dishes.
16. Make fruit your dessert: Slice a banana lengthwise and top with a scoop of low-fat frozen yogurt. Sprinkle with a tablespoon of chopped nuts.
17. Stock your freezer with frozen vegetables to steam or stir-fry for a quick side dish.
18. Make your main dish a salad of dark, leafy greens and other colorful vegetables. Add chickpeas or edamame (fresh soybeans). Top with low-fat dressing.*
19. Fruit on the grill: Make kabobs with pineapple, peaches and banana. Grill on low heat until fruit is hot and slightly golden.
20. Dip: Whole wheat pita wedges in hummus, baked tortilla chips in salsa, strawberries or apple slices in low-fat yogurt, or graham crackers in applesauce.

**See “Color Your Plate with Salad” at www.eatright.org/nutritiontipsheets for more tips on creating healthy salads*

For a referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist and for additional food and nutrition information visit www.eatright.org.



The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving the public's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

This tip sheet is provided by:



Authored by Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics staff registered dietitian nutritionists.

Grains and Starches

- Limit portions of grains and starches to 1/4 plate or 1/2 cup
- Rice, pasta, breads, and starchy vegetables such as potatoes, corn, peas
- Choose whole grains more often
 - Switch to 100% whole grain bread, bread products, and crackers
 - Try whole grain cereal or oatmeal (overnight oats)
 - Popcorn without added salt or butter
 - Try brown rice or 100% whole grain pasta
 - Try mixing half and half to start
 - Add quinoa, brown rice, or barley to soups/stews, stuffed peppers, salads, and other mixed dishes
 - Use whole wheat flour when baking



Try these Healthy Grains

- Whole Wheat Bread
- Rye Bread
- Ezekiel 4:9 Bread
- Whole Wheat Flour
- Whole Grain Hamburger Buns
- Whole Wheat Cereal (Kashi Golean, shredded wheat, Wheat Chex, Raisin Bran etc.)
- Brown Rice
- Wild Rice
- Oats
- Whole Wheat Crackers
- Barley
- Whole Wheat Pasta
- Buckwheat
- Amaranth
- Bulgur (cracked wheat)
- Millet
- Muesli
- Popcorn
- Spelt
- Whole Wheat Cornmeal
- Whole Grain Sorghum
- Whole Wheat Tortillas
- Rice Tortillas
- Whole Wheat Pita
- Whole Wheat Naan Bread
- Whole Wheat Couscous
- Teff
- Quinoa

Protein

- Choose protein foods at every meal and snack to stay full.
- Tips for healthy proteins:
 1. Choose lean meats and poultry
 - Lean beef cuts include round, roast, sirloin, chuck shoulder
 - Choose lean ground beef—try “90/10” instead of “80/20”
 - Choose lean pork—tenderloin, center loin
 - Skinless chicken breasts
 - Lean deli meats
 2. Choose fish at least twice per week
 - Grill or bake salmon, trout, or other favorite fish
 - Purchase tuna in water—top salads, crackers, or sandwiches
 3. Vary meals with plant-based proteins
 - Make chili or soups with beans, lentils or split peas
 - Add black beans to salads or make enchiladas with beans instead of meat
 - Hummus, veggie burgers, falafel, tofu

Dairy

- Good source of protein, calcium and vitamin D
- Choose “light,” “low-fat,” or “fat free” dairy products
 - Skim or 1% milk
 - Cheese
 - Greek yogurt, yogurt, cottage cheese
 - Purchase individual containers for easy snacks
 - Avoid high sugar varieties such as “fruit on the bottom”
- Limit high fat dairy foods
 - Limit cream and whole milk in coffee and other beverages
 - Cream-based soups, sauces, and desserts
 - High fat cheeses

Do you have trouble tolerating lactose?

- Try lactose-free dairy milk (i.e. Fairlife, Lactaid)
- Greek yogurt generally has less lactose than regular yogurt
- Hard cheeses have less lactose than soft cheeses
- Consider taking a lactase enzyme
- If choosing dairy milk alternatives, remember to choose unsweetened and check protein content

Let's Plan a Meal:



More Tips for Meal Planning:

- Eat small, frequent meals and snacks to help stabilize blood sugars, reduce cravings, stay full, and reduce overeating
- Don't let yourself get too hungry before you eat
- Have breakfast every morning, even if it's something small
- Pack healthy meals and snacks to work/school and on-the-go

Quick breakfast ideas

- Oatmeal or whole grain cereal with skim or 1% milk
 - ⇒ Make ahead tip: try overnight oats by soaking ½ cup oats in milk overnight
 - ⇒ If using instant oatmeal, choose “no sugar added”
- Greek yogurt with berries
- Cottage cheese with fruit
- Banana with 1 Tbsp. peanut butter
- 1-2 hard-boiled eggs + whole grain English muffin or bagel thin
 - ⇒ Make ahead tip: boil eggs at the beginning of the week
- Protein shake or protein bar
- If you have more time:
 - ⇒ Veggie omelet with onions, mushrooms, spinach, tomatoes + 1 slice whole grain toast
 - ⇒ Make a fruit salad with low-fat yogurt and mint

Pack to Work and School

Easy-to-grab portion controlled foods

- Individual Greek yogurt or cottage cheese
- Individual packs of nuts (i.e. 100 calorie packs)
- Whole fruit (Oranges, bananas, apples, pears)
- Instant oatmeal packets (“no sugar added”)
- Low sodium soups
- Portion-controlled meals (i.e. Lean Cuisine, Smart Ones, Healthy Choice, Kashi)
- Tuna packets
- Protein packs (i.e. P3)
- Protein shake or protein bar

Prepare Ahead

- Sliced fruits and vegetables
- Leftovers from the night before
- Salads with protein
 - Leafy greens, sliced fruits and vegetables
 - Leftover grilled chicken, salmon, tuna packet, hard boiled eggs, chickpeas or black beans
 - Light dressing or oil and vinegar
- Homemade Lunchables
 - Lean deli meats, low-fat cheese, crackers
- Sandwiches on whole grain bread, bagel thin, pita, or tortilla
 - Tuna in water mixed with light mayo and relish
 - Lean deli meats and low-fat cheese
 - Leftover meats and vegetables
 - Veggies and hummus
 - Mashed beans, vegetables, avocado slices, low-fat cheese, cilantro, lime juice

Building A Healthy Snack:

- Snacks can provide energy between meals and keep you from over-eating later in the day.
- Snack only when you're hungry. Avoid grazing and mindless eating, especially when you are feeling bored or stressed.
- Try to incorporate protein and/or fiber to help you stay full.
- Keep snacks ~200 calories or less.
- Pay attention to portion sizes. Eating more frequently means less at each snack.
 - Consider pre-measured snacks
 - If buying in bulk, portion foods out in small containers as soon as you bring it in the house. Store excess in a place that is not easy to get to.

Healthy Snack Ideas (~200 calories or less)

- | | |
|--|---|
| -1 Tbsp. peanut butter + 1 apple, banana or celery | -1 (6") tortilla with ¼ cup black beans + 2 Tbsp. salsa |
| -Sliced vegetables + 2 Tbsp. low-fat ranch, light dressing, or hummus | -1 cup tomato soup + 5 whole grain crackers |
| -Try cucumber, cherry tomatoes, carrots, celery, radishes, snap peas, bell peppers | -3 cups popcorn + 3 Tbsp. grated Parmesan cheese |
| -1 cup sliced fruit with 1 hard-boiled egg | -1 small baked potato + salsa + 1 oz. low-fat cheese |
| -1 cup edamame | -Mini sandwich – whole grain dinner roll with 1 slice lean deli meat + 1 slice low-fat cheese + mustard |
| -6 whole wheat crackers + 1 slice low-fat cheese | -Protein shake or protein bar |
| | -100 calorie pack + 1 piece of fruit |

Enjoy! Choose beverages with <10 calories per serving	Avoid Carbonation, Caffeine, Sugar, Alcohol
Water	Sparkling water
Fruit-infused water *try citrus (lemon, lime, orange), berries, cucumber, mint, ginger, rosemary	Juice
Decaf tea	Sweetened teas / lemonades
Decaf coffee	Sweetened and caffeinated coffees
Beverages sweetened with artificial or non-nutritive sweeteners	Soda, Energy Drinks