

Meal Planning

GETTING STARTED

Planning your meals and getting organized for the week will increase your chances of sticking to your nutrition plan. Consider the following tips to set you up for success.

✓ Schedule a time for meal planning

Each week, schedule a time when you have at least 30 minutes to think about your week and the meals you would like to prepare. Forecast your week. Consider how many meals you'll be having at home, if you have plans to go out or if you'll be eating on the run. Ask your family their plans as well.

✓ Start with your dinners

For most people, breakfast, lunches and snacks are more routine. Dinners are generally the biggest meal of the day and more variable.



Keep in mind the Plate Balance concept. Include foods from at least 3 of the 4 food groups at each meal. Incorporate a protein source, fruits and/or vegetables, a good quality grain or starch and healthy fats.



Keep in mind principles of healthy eating. Work toward eating less meat by planning at least 1 fish or seafood-based meal and 1 vegetarian or meatless meal per week. Choose whole grains more often than white refined grains. Aim for at least two kinds of vegetables at each meal.



Plan for at least 3-4 entrées for the week. Include 2-3 familiar meals and add a new recipe to the mix. Cook extra so that you have enough for a lunch of leftovers or another quick-to-reheat dinner. Use leftovers creatively to keep meals interesting and varied.

EXAMPLES:

MEAL 1 - bowl of chili sprinkled with grated cheddar cheese and a small whole wheat bun.

MEAL 2 - chili on a baked potato with a dollop of plain Greek yogurt and chopped green onions with steamed rapini on the side.

✓ Enlist the help of others

Ask your significant other or your children to help come up with meal ideas everyone will enjoy. Children who are involved in the meal planning process are more invested in the meals that are prepared. If you live alone, get together with other single friends to plan and cook meals for the week.



✓ Write down your menu for the week

Use a calendar, a message board in your kitchen or a meal planning form you can post on your fridge (see form) to write out your plan for the week for everyone to see. Whoever gets home first at the end of the work day can get started on dinner.

✓ Make a grocery list

Check your stock of staple foods so that you have options for quick and easy breakfast, packed lunches and side dishes. Keep a notepad in the cupboard or on the fridge to keep a running list of staple foods you run out of so that you don't forget to pick them up on your next shopping trip. Make a list of all the extra ingredients you need to prepare your planned entrées.