

# Quick and Easy Meals

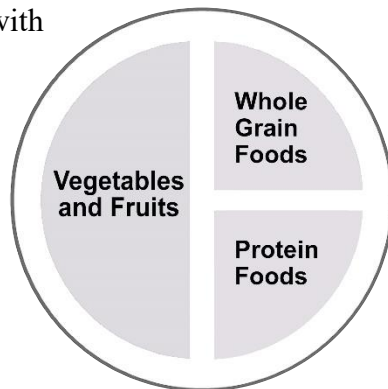
Making healthy meals can be quick and easy. Try the tips below to avoid turning to restaurants, take-out, or fast food on busy days.

## Plan

Planning meals ahead helps you make healthier food choices every day. It can also save time, money, and trips to the grocery store.

- Use the [Weekly Menu Planner](#) to plan for a few days or for a week. Check your cupboards, fridge, and freezer to see what foods you already have. Use these foods when planning your menu. Include 3 meals each day, plus some snacks if you like. Plan to make simpler meals on busy days.

- Plan healthy meals with the Eat Well Plate:



- Make  $\frac{1}{2}$  your plate vegetables and fruits
  - Choose whole grain foods
  - Include protein foods
  - Make water your drink of choice
- Use your [Weekly Menu Planner](#) to make a [Healthy Grocery list](#). Add any items you don't already have to the list.
  - Try some of the ideas on page 2 of this handout when you don't have much time to make meals.
  - Plan to cook enough food for a second meal. These extras can be used in a different way than the meal before.
  - Healthy drink choices, besides water, include lower fat milk, unsweetened fortified plant-based beverages such as soy and almond, and unsweetened coffee and tea.

## Prepare

- Using your weekly menu, begin to prepare meals the night before. Use leftovers, defrost meats in the refrigerator, and set recipes out on the counter.
- Use a slow cooker, rice cooker, or microwave oven to help save time.
- Have family members take turns preparing meals. Older children can start supper when they get home from school using a recipe or simple directions. Younger kids can set the table, or lay out breakfast and lunch supplies for the next day, after supper is finished.















- Wash and cut-up vegetables and fruits to have ready any time for snacks and meals.
- Drain and rinse canned beans or lentils and store in a plastic bag or container in the fridge to use in soups or for salad toppings.
- Pre-cook meat or poultry, then portion and freeze. It can be used in meals like wraps, tacos, pizza, spaghetti sauce, or fried rice to save cooking time.
- Make extra rice or noodles, then refrigerate or freeze in a plastic bag for another day.

## Pack

- Right after supper, pack lunches for the next day. Get everyone in the house involved. Remember to store packed meals in the fridge overnight.
- For extra busy times, pack healthy snacks like whole grain crackers and cheese, nuts, fruit, vegetables and dip, or yogurt with an ice pack.

# Can't think of anything to eat?

Here are some ideas for a quick, easy, and healthy meal. Each meal includes vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods, and protein foods from [Canada's Food Guide](#).

Meal Ideas	
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh or frozen fruit</li> <li>• Oatmeal or whole grain cereal</li> <li>• Lower fat plain yogurt</li> <li>• Nuts and/or seeds</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh or pre-made salad</li> <li>• Whole grain baked pita pieces or whole grain crackers.</li> <li>• Canned chickpeas, tuna, or boiled eggs</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh or frozen vegetables (celery, carrots, onion) added to lower sodium broth</li> <li>• Pot barley or whole grain noodles</li> <li>• Tofu, lentils, or cooked meat</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sliced banana</li> <li>• Whole grain bread</li> <li>• Peanut butter</li> <li>• Unsweetened fortified soy beverage</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh vegetables (lettuce, tomatoes, carrots)</li> <li>• Whole grain pita bread</li> <li>• Canned salmon or tuna</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boiled vegetables (broccoli and/or carrots)</li> <li>• Quinoa</li> <li>• Baked chicken or fish</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh or canned fruit (berries, oranges, pears)</li> <li>• Whole grain toast</li> <li>• A poached or hardboiled egg</li> <li>• Lower fat milk</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh vegetables (spinach, peppers, zucchini)</li> <li>• Whole grain pita bread or naan with tomato sauce</li> <li>• Cooked meat sliced and grated cheese</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tomato sauce with vegetables and a side garden salad</li> <li>• Whole grain pasta</li> <li>• Cooked ground beef (lean or extra lean) or vegetarian ground round</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roasted vegetables (corn, peppers, onion)</li> <li>• Whole grain tortilla or roti</li> <li>• Canned brown, kidney, or navy beans</li> </ul>
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stir-fried vegetables (broccoli, bok choy, green beans)</li> <li>• Whole grain brown or wild rice</li> <li>• Sliced cooked meat (beef, pork, turkey, chicken) or tofu</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sautéed vegetables (peppers, mushrooms, spinach)</li> <li>• Whole grain pita bread or chapatti</li> <li>• Scrambled eggs</li> </ul>

## For more information

- Visit [Canada.ca/Food Guide](http://Canada.ca/Food Guide).
- Visit [healthyeatingstartshere.ca](http://healthyeatingstartshere.ca) to find the [Weekly Menu Planner](#) and [Healthy Grocery list](#).