

NUTRITION INFORMATION FROM YOUR DIETITIAN

Menu Planning

We live in a very busy world. With all our responsibilities, it can be hard to find time to cook or sit down and eat as a family. However, planned family meals are an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Family meals offer many benefits that can help us:

- Eat healthier
- Save time and money
- Prevent or delay type 2 diabetes
- Lower rates of overweight / obesity, eating disorders, and substance abuse in children and adolescents

Learning some basic meal planning and preparation skills will help make the kitchen experience more enjoyable. With a little practice, cooking at home will become easier, and the meals will be appetizing and healthy. While there are many approaches to meal planning, here are two main methods:

Method #1: Ingredients

Shop for a pantry and refrigerator full of “staples.”
Prepare meals based on what you have.

Method #2: Meals

Plan your meals for the week in advance.
Go to the store with a list.
Shop for the ingredients.
Follow the plan.

You may find that one method works better for you than the other. Regardless of the method you prefer, it helps to understand some basics. As you begin, remember to:

- **Keep it simple**
- **Read all instructions before you begin**
- **Organize your time, tools, ingredients**
- **Have the right tools**
- **Keep things clean**
- **Be safe**
- **Manage your time**
- **Balance meals**



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Ingredient Method

Start with perishable ingredients that you need or want to use, and then think about creating a balanced meal. Here are some examples:

Ingredients	Meal Options
Broccoli Kale	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pasta: whole wheat noodles with black beans, kale, broccoli, feta cheese, lemon juice, salt, pepper, olive oil, and pine nuts 2. Stir-fry: brown rice, tempeh or eggs, onion, carrot, broccoli, kale, peanuts (soy sauce, garlic, & sesame oil)
Butternut Squash Tomatoes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pureed squash soup: (onions, squash, tomatoes, garlic, chicken broth) 2. Burgers with squash fries & tomato cucumber salad
Chicken Breasts Spinach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baked or grilled chicken with fresh/dried herbs & spinach salad 2. Pasta: cut chicken into pieces and toss with pasta, spinach, and tomato sauce or olive oil and extra veggies
Green Beans Feta Cheese Eggs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Frittata with green beans, peppers, onions, tomatoes (or any available veggies), topped with Feta cheese 2. Sautéed green beans topped with feta cheese; scrambled eggs wrapped in a tortilla with veggies

Pantry Staples:

- Beans (canned or fresh)
- Grains (quinoa, barley, oats)
- Pasta (whole wheat, regular, and different sizes and shapes)
- Nuts (almonds, peanuts, walnuts, pine nuts)
- Rice (brown)
- Bread
- Oils (olive, canola, peanut)
- Chicken broth



Perishable Staples:

- Veggies (carrots, broccoli, lettuce, leafy greens and other seasonal)
- Starchy veggies (squash, sweet potatoes, yams)
- Cheese (parmesan, feta, sharp cheddar, fresh mozzarella)
- Yogurt (32 oz. plain – consider Greek yogurts)
- Tofu/tempeh
- Milk (skim, soy)



Frozen Staples:

- Meat, chicken
- Fish
- Frozen veggies



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Meal Method

Plan weekly meals and make a shopping list based on what you intend to prepare. Consider preparing dishes that can do “double duty” so that you have lunches or portions of dinner prepared for later in the week. Here is an example:

Day	Meal	Make extra or prepare more	Shopping List	
			Pantry	Fridge/Freezer
Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peanut Crusted Salmon Brown rice Green beans 	Make double the brown rice and store in an airtight container for use later in the week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown rice Peanuts Breadcrumbs Orange Salt/pepper Olive oil Garlic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green beans Salmon
Tuesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tofu Mushroom Burgers Green salad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use leftover brown rice to make the burgers Bring extra for lunch Save leftover tofu for Friday's tacos Clean extra mushrooms for tomorrow's dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oats Canola oil Balsamic vinegar Tomatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tofu Mushrooms Cheddar Eggs Lettuce Cucumber Fresh mozzarella
Wednesday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broccoli and Mushroom Frittata with Feta and Pine nuts Crusty whole wheat bread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leftovers for lunch Use cleaned mushrooms from Tuesday's dinner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pine nuts Dried thyme Oregano Zucchini Bread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broccoli Feta cheese Leek
Thursday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ginger-Lime Chicken Skewers Quinoa and Bell Pepper Salad 	Mix leftover chicken with quinoa and bell pepper salad for a great lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quinoa Peppers Onion Soy sauce Lime Ginger root Red pepper 	Chicken
Friday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tofu Tacos Black Bean Salad 	Use tofu leftover from the burgers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole grain tortillas Black beans Avocado 	Carrots
Saturday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greek Burgers Squash and Beet Fries 	Cut extra squash for tomorrow's pasta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tomato paste Whole grain rolls Squash Beets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean ground beef/buffalo Fresh rosemary
Sunday	Whole Wheat Pasta with Chicken Sausage, Kale, Squash, Zucchini, & Pine nuts	Leftovers for Monday's lunch	Tomato sauce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicken sausage Kale

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Take Action Now

Consider the following options to take action and start menu planning:

- ☐ Decide how often you will do menu planning (weekly, biweekly). Schedule time to plan the number of meals needed between planning sessions and create a grocery list. (See menu planning form provided at the end of handout.)
- ☐ Plan time for meal preparation into your daily schedule
- ☐ Organize cooking and food supplies for quick and easy meals
- ☐ Make/Prepare extra to simplify meals on another day
- ☐ Think of ways you can have family or shared meals more often.
- ☐ Eat your meals without the TV on or other electronics around.
- ☐ Other: _____

Additional Resources

- choosemyplate.gov
- fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org
- simplifysupper.com
- cookinglight.com
- intermountainhealthcare.org/live-well/eat-well

Your Action Plan

What are you ready to do?

Choose a healthy lifestyle goal that you're ready, willing, and able to work on NOW.

What is your motivation for making this change?

What specific behaviors or actions would help you achieve this goal?

What potential barriers might you encounter as you work toward this goal?

What is your strategy to break through these potential barriers?

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