

Meal Planning

Planning healthy meals is easy. Just follow these simple tips.

Plan for 3-Every-Day of Dairy – Eating three servings of dairy foods, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, a day is a deliciously easy and wholesome way for families to meet their daily calcium needs. Research shows that Americans who consume more dairy foods have better overall diets, consume more nutrients, and see improved bone health.

Let the Pyramid be Your Guide – Hot or cold, convenience or scratch, everyday foods or new and exotic – use MyPyramid for planning healthy meals. Include foods from all the food groups, and choose a variety of foods from each group. A variety of foods prevents boredom and is the best way to ensure your family gets the 40+ nutrients they need every day.

Plan Ahead – It avoids the question, “What’s for dinner tonight?” and increases the likelihood that meals are nutritious. There’s no magic formula. Choose what works best for you – one day, a few days, or a week at a time. The key is knowing your family’s schedule and including foods that can be prepared in the time available. Use your plan for your grocery list.

Think Convenience – Take advantage of the variety of healthful and convenient foods available. For busy nights, plan to pick up a pizza, roast chicken, or entrée on the way home. Prepare a salad, cut up some fruit, cook some pasta, or slice some bread, pour some milk and dinner is served!

Keep a Well-Stocked Pantry and Fridge – Put nutritious meals together in a hurry when there’s a last-minute schedule change or you didn’t get around to planning.

Plan Family Meals and Meals for the Family – Schedule family meals several times during the week. Children who eat with their families tend to have healthier eating patterns. Include your favorite, as well as your children’s. Too often it’s easiest to only plan meals around what kids like. Remember that children need to grow to join the family and develop a taste for new foods.

Save Time (and Money) by using Leftovers – Many foods taste just as good, if not better, the second time around. So be sure to incorporate leftovers into your menu. Not only does it cut time in the kitchen, it’s a great way to stretch your food dollar. Use leftover chicken in salads, soups, pasta dishes, quesadillas, or sandwiches. Rice is great for stir-frys, pilafs, rice pudding, soups, or salads. Toss cold veggies in salads, or add them to sandwiches or casseroles.

Source: www.nutritionexploration.com