

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.
- For a healthy meal include foods from at least 3 of the 4 food groups from [Canada's Food Guide: Vegetables and Fruit](#), [Grain Products](#), [Milk and Alternatives](#) and [Meat and Alternatives](#).
- 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 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. For example, roast two chickens instead of one. Cut up the second one and use it in a stir-fry or as a salad topping for the next day.



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 fruit to have ready any time for snacks and meals.
- 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.
- 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.

Pack

- Pack lunches for the next day, right after supper. Get everyone in the house involved. Remember to keep lunches cold 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, well balanced, and nutritious meal. Each line has a complete meal that includes all 4 food groups from [Canada's Food Guide](#). Select one and try it today.

Meat and Alternatives	Grain Products	Vegetables and Fruit	Milk and Alternatives
Nuts or seeds	with oatmeal or bran cereal	on top of thawed frozen fruit	and plain yogurt
Canned chickpeas, canned tuna, or a boiled egg	with pita pieces or whole grain crackers	and fresh or pre-made salad with light dressing	serve milk to drink
Add tofu, cooked meat, canned chickpeas, or lentils	to rice or noodles in broth	stir in frozen vegetables and heat	serve yogurt for dessert
Poached or hard boiled egg	on toasted whole grain bread	serve fresh or canned fruit in juice	drink steamed milk
Canned tuna or salmon with mayonnaise	on a whole grain bun	top with shredded carrots and lettuce	serve cream soup made with milk
Mix an egg and seasonings into ground beef and form into burgers, pan-fry	serve on a whole grain bun	add lettuce and tomato to burger, serve fruit as dessert	place two slices of cheese on the burger
Peanut butter	on whole grain bread	with sliced banana	serve yogurt on the side
Place sliced cooked meat on top of	whole grain pita or naan covered in tomato sauce	top with spinach, zucchini or other sliced vegetables	top with grated cheese and bake until cheese melts
Brown ground beef or vegetarian ground round in a frying pan	add cooked pasta	and tomato sauce, along with other fresh or frozen vegetables	top with cheese and broil in oven
Heat canned brown beans, kidney beans, or navy beans, sprinkle with chili powder	put in a whole grain tortilla	serve with salsa and cut-up fresh fruit on the side	add grated cheese to the tortilla
Stir-fry sliced beef, pork, Chicken, or tofu with your favourite herbs and spices	serve with cooked brown rice or whole grain couscous	add fresh or frozen vegetables to meat while frying	serve milk pudding for dessert
Grill or bake chicken or fish with your favourite herbs and spices	serve with cooked quinoa or noodles	add a side salad	serve milk to drink
Scramble eggs	serve with whole grain toast, pita, chapatti, or tortilla	add vegetables to eggs and then pan fry together	top with grated cheese