

Quick and Easy Meals

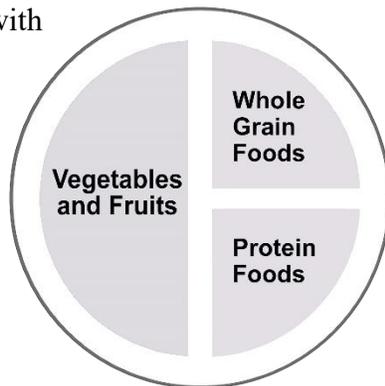
Making healthy meals can be quick and easy. Try the tips below to avoid turning to restaurants, take-out, or fast food on busy days.

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

For more information

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