

VitaMin

Vital health information in a minute

Meal planning made simple

When you're short on time, it's easy to get stuck in a rut with last-minute meals. By carving out time to plan what's for dinner, you can help save money, streamline your shopping trips and cook healthier meals at home. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you plan for a week of healthy meals.

Step 1: Create a meal planning calendar. This can be as high-tech or low-tech as you'd like. For example, you can make a meal planning grid on your computer or use a meal-planning app on your smartphone. Or, try using a mini white board or wall calendar in your kitchen.

Step 2: Select a lineup of recipes for your weekly plan. Include a few family favorites and some new healthy recipes, too. For cost savings and efficiency, look for recipes that use seasonal produce or ingredients you already have on hand.

Step 3: Get your grocery list in order. Create a master list of ingredients for all the meals in your weekly plan. Use an electronic or reusable format so you can easily make updates and use it again.

Step 4: Save time in the kitchen. Doing some prep work in the kitchen can help your meals come together quickly. If you know you'll be in a rush at dinnertime, prepare the ingredients you'll need ahead of time. You can premeasure spices and other dry ingredients so they're ready to drop in. Chop veggies ahead of time and store in a container in the refrigerator.

Step 5: Love your leftovers. You can save even more time by doubling a recipe and freezing half. Or, transform tonight's leftovers into a completely new meal tomorrow. For example, leftover grilled chicken could be used as the base for tacos or chicken salad.

Get your grocery list ready with help from www.ChooseMyPlate.gov, where you'll find more tips on menu ideas, eating on a budget and food safety.

This is intended to be general health information and not medical advice or services. You should consult your doctor for medical advice or services, including seeking advice before undertaking a new diet or exercise program.



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