

Getting Started with Meal Planning

Before you Shop:

- **Map out the Week Ahead:** Decide how much time you are willing or able to commit to meal planning. **This will vary week to week!** If you're pressed for time, use prepared fresh items to your advantage: baby carrots, prewashed lettuce, individual yogurt or hummus cups, precooked chicken, canned beans/tuna and minute rice are all great time savers!

- **Start with Dinner**
 - Look at your schedule and decide how many nights you have available to cook that week.
 - Are you going to plan for leftovers? Will you repurpose leftovers for new dinners or take them for lunch?
 - Are you going to batch cook recipes and freeze extra meals?
 - Plan 3-4 dinner meals for the week ahead.

- **Choose some easy breakfast and/or lunch options to rotate**
 - 2 different meals is usually enough variety for breakfast and lunch
 - Try having a drawer with sections of different portioned snack options to round out lunch meals (washed fruit, vegetable sticks, hard boiled eggs, pre portioned yogurt, hummus, nuts, protein bars).

Easy Lunch Options: Sandwiches, salads, wraps, hot or cold bowl meals, bento boxes, casseroles.

Breakfast on the go: Overnight oats, baked oatmeal, egg wraps/sandwiches, smoothies, peanut butter and banana roll up.

- **Make your List**
 - Pull out any recipes you need, and block off time to cook.
 - Make your grocery list starting with any staples you need, as well as ingredients for recipes.



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At The Grocery Store:

1. Fill your cart with **whole, minimally processed foods**. *Remember – the best and most nutritious foods for us often have no labels.*
2. **Shop with a list**. Keep a running tally of items you need for the week's recipes.
3. **Use the perimeter** of the store to get fresh foods: vegetables, fruit, milk products, raw protein, and bread.
4. Go up and down the aisles for: **whole grain** products, low-sodium **canned foods** and **freezer staples**. Frozen fruits and vegetables are just as healthy as fresh!
5. **Never shop when you are hungry**. It may lead to snacking or buying on impulse.
6. **Scan the highest and lowest shelves**, not just the shelves at eye level. Unbranded products and whole-grain/low-sodium items are often found on the top or bottom shelves.
7. **Save money! Buy more when your favourite items are on sale or in season**. This works best for pantry items like pasta, or foods that you can freeze.
8. **Read food labels**. Use ingredient lists and the % Daily Value (DV) column to make informed decisions!

In the Kitchen:

- Do some washing/chopping in advance (up to 3 days worth):
 - Vegetables: peppers, carrots, celery, cherry tomatoes, broccoli/cauliflower
 - Fruit: washing and dry whole fruits, grapes and berries.
 - Wrap washed/chopped produce in paper towels to prevent spoilage
- Pre-cook longer cook grains like wild rice or quinoa.
- Pre-portion bulk foods (yogurt, crackers, nuts etc.)
- Make a quinoa, couscous or bean salad for quick lunches/ side dishes.
- Batch cook on a day you are in a cooking mood and freeze in smaller portions (e.g. casseroles, soups, muffins, energy bars).
- Re-purpose leftovers (see next page!)

Ideas for using leftovers

Tired of eating the same meal twice? Get creative with these tips to transform leftovers into a whole new meal.

- **Salmon:**
 - Add salmon to a salad or sandwich for a quick lunch.
 - Add chunks of salmon to homemade macaroni and cheese.
 - Mash to make salmon cakes.
- **Roast chicken:**
 - Shred chicken for quick quesadillas.
 - Make your own chicken noodle soup with whole grain noodles, lower-sodium broth, and frozen peas and carrots.
 - Add chicken to a wholesome white bean chili.
- **Chili:**
 - Stuff peppers with chilli and bake.
 - Use as a topping for baked sweet potatoes.
 - Toss with whole grain pasta or rice for a super speedy meal.
- **Pork tenderloin:**
 - Use in tacos or grilled sandwiches.
 - Cook with lower sodium tomato sauce and frozen vegetables and serve over rice.
- **Cooked vegetables:**
 - Whip up leftover vegetables in an omelette.
 - Add to a pasta dish.
 - Top a whole-grain pita pizza.
- **Chickpeas:**
 - Stuff a whole wheat pita pocket.
 - Serve over baby spinach.
 - Mix with quinoa and greens for a nutritious bowl.
- **Cooked brown rice:**
 - Make a quick stir-fry with frozen vegetables.
 - Add to soups and stews.
 - Toss together a rice and lentil salad.
- **Stir-fry:**
 - Roll up leftover stir-fry in a whole wheat wrap.
 - Add stir-fry vegetables and tofu to soup.

Adapted from: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/eating-nutrition/healthy-eating-saine-alimentation/tips-trucs-eng.php>