

Healthy Cooking Starts at Home

Create healthy and great tasting meals and snacks by planning your meals ahead of time. Planning in advance will save time and reduce trips to the grocery store. It's all about being prepared...the more you plan, the easier it gets.

Plan Ahead

- Do an inventory of what you have at home before shopping.
- Look over flyers for sales and menu ideas.
- Plan a menu for a week using *Canada's Food Guide* (meals should include at least 3 of the 4 food groups from *Canada's Food Guide* with at least one serving from the Vegetables and Fruit Food Group).
- Make a shopping list based on your menu. List groceries you need under each of the four food groups. This is an easy way to ensure your meals are balanced.
- Eat before you go shopping. You will make fewer impulse purchases if you're not hungry.

Getting healthy meals on the table doesn't have to take a lot of time!

Fast and Easy Meal Preparation

Stock up your kitchen on the basics from *Canada's Food Guide* including vegetables and fruit, whole grain bread products, whole grain pasta and brown rice, milk, yogurt, cheese, lean meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds.

Use frozen or canned products to reduce preparation time. Choose canned reduced sodium (or rinse vegetables to reduce salt) or frozen vegetables without sauces. Choose unsweetened frozen fruit or fruit packed in juice.

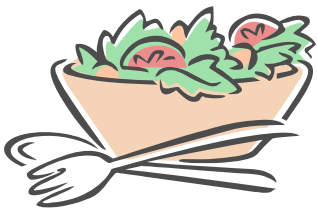
Prepare foods ahead of time. Make some time to cut up raw vegetables (i.e. cauliflower, broccoli, celery) or fruit (i.e. pineapple, cantaloupe, melon) when you get home from grocery shopping and keep them on a shelf in the refrigerator so they are more visible. Cook extra rice, chicken or ground beef when you are preparing one meal, to use for meals later in the week.

Make use of "Plan-overs". Cook up double batches of soups, stews, casseroles, pasta dishes or lasagna to serve one for dinner and put the other in the freezer for future quick dinners. Foods can be kept in the freezer for up to three months.



Healthy Meal Tips from Starter to Finish

Starters – soups, salads and dips



- Offer lower-fat dips including plain yogurt, lower-fat fruit yogurt, hummus, light sour cream.
- Replace cream in soups or sauces with lower fat milk (2%, 1% or skim), evaporated milk (diluted or not), or lower fat yogurt.
- Add more vegetables, beans or grains such as bulgur and quinoa to soups to increase fibre.
- Replace high fat commercial croutons in salads or on soups with grated lower fat cheese, bran buds, sunflower seeds, dried or fresh fruit.
- Reduce the fat in your oil-based dressing by pouring off some of the oil before shaking the bottle. Use the leftover flavoured oil to make your own salad dressing.

- Make your own salad dressing with smaller amounts of oil, flavoured vinegars, apple or orange juice, and fresh or dried herbs.
- Use “light mayonnaise” when making dressings or dips or replace half of the dressing with lower fat or fat-free yogurt.

Main Dishes

- Meals should include at least 3 of the 4 food groups from *Canada’s Food Guide* with at least one serving from the Vegetables and Fruit Food Group.
- Limit portion sizes meals. Fill about half of the plate with a colourful variety of vegetables. Portions of fish, poultry, lean meat should be 2 ½ ounces or about the size of a deck of cards.
- Consider portions of meat when making mixed dishes as well, including pasta with meat sauce, stews or casseroles. Use smaller amounts of meat and add more vegetables.
- Trim all visible fat from meat and take the skin off poultry and fish to reduce fat and calories.
- Use lower fat cooking methods such as baking, broiling, steaming, roasting, poaching, microwaving, grilling and barbequing instead of frying or preparing in higher fat creamy sauces.
- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu more often. Try having chick peas in salads, beans in tacos or lentils in meatloaf. Make more meatless dishes like vegetarian chili, vegetarian lasagna, baked beans or add a can of beans into a soup, salad or casserole.

Vegetables

- *Canada’s Food Guide* recommends eating at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day. Choose vegetables prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt.
- Make raw vegetables easily available by washing, cutting up into bite size pieces and storing at eye level in the refrigerator for the whole family to enjoy as a colourful “grab and go” snack.
- Serve vegetables plain or use fresh or dried herbs, spices, flavoured vinegar or lemon juice instead of salt to enhance the flavour of vegetables.
- Consider buying pre-bagged vegetables such as baby carrots, leafy greens or green beans, which can be quickly tossed in a salad, stir-fry or casserole.



Desserts

- *Canada’s Food Guide* recommends limiting foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt such as cakes and pastries, chocolate and candy, cookies, doughnuts, muffins, ice cream and frozen desserts.
- Try fresh fruit, fruit salads or kebabs (Ontario grown if possible) with lower fat yogurt dip. Fresh fruit is a great low fat dessert for any occasion.
- Serve lower-fat yogurt (2% M.F. or less) or yogurt parfait (with low-fat yogurt, whole grain cereal and berries).
- Try a fruit crisp or crumble instead of a fruit-filled pie.
- Top meringues with fresh fruit salad.
- Try sherbet, gelato, or frozen yogurt instead of ice cream.
- Serve angel food cake with fresh fruit and lower-fat yogurt (2% M.F. or less).
- Provide trans-fat free, lower-fat baked goods: muffins (small, mini or cut in half), cereal/granola bars, oatmeal cookies, etc.

