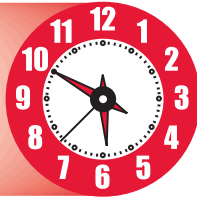


Healthy Meals in a Hurry



Fast foods, frozen pizza, carry-out meals—all are popular quick meals; some even have healthy options. But when you're ready for more...here's a 3-step plan to guide you. Healthy foods can be part of any schedule and cooking style. Planning is the key to creating menu options that fit your lifestyle.

Tip #1

STOCK UP ON THE BASICS

Smart shopping puts the ingredients you need where you need them—in your cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer. Think about the foods you like to serve (or want to serve). Use the following list as a guide to create your own master shopping list.

IN THE CUPBOARD

- Spaghetti, macaroni, other pasta
- Packaged biscuit baking mix
- Ready-to-heat sauces and reduced fat, reduced sodium soups
- Rice, barley, lentils, split peas
- Potatoes, onions
- Canned fruits, vegetables, beans, tuna
- Canned and bottled fruit and vegetable juices
- Salsa, seasoning and sauce mixes, and other condiments
- Cooking oil, non-stick spray

IN THE REFRIGERATOR AND/OR FREEZER

- Fresh and frozen vegetables, baby carrots, pre-torn salad greens
- Fresh and frozen fruit and fruit juices
- Frozen chopped onion and green pepper
- Tortillas, pita bread, pizza crust, bagels, ready-to-bake rolls, whole grain bread, English muffins
- Cheese (grated, sliced), yogurt, cottage cheese, milk, eggs, margarine
- Cooked sliced meat or poultry, fish, ground meats
- Skinless, boneless chicken and/or turkey breasts
- Cooked pasta, rice, bulgur, barley

Tip #2

MAKE CONVENIENCE FOODS HEALTHIER

For boxed mixes of rice, pasta, stuffing mix—use only half (or omit) the margarine called for in the instructions.

For seasoned rice mixes—use only half of the seasoning packet; add the remaining half when cooking plain rice or as a seasoning for slow cooked meats.

For frozen stir fry meals (those with all ingredients included)—use half of the seasoning packet to reduce sodium content.

If packaged mix calls for milk—use nonfat dry milk powder and use twice as much to increase the amount of calcium.

When heating tortillas—instead of using fat in skillet, use cooking spray, no spray, or heat in the microwave.

To a frozen pizza—add chopped veggies (raw or cooked) to the top before baking.

On baked potatoes—instead of sour cream, use cottage cheese or plain yogurt.

To any creamed soup (cream of chicken, celery, mushroom)—add frozen mixed vegetables for a healthier soup meal.

To tomato-based pasta sauce—add grated frozen spinach using up to one-half package of spinach per jar of pasta sauce (or start with less and increase amount as family adjusts to this addition).

To spaghetti sauce—add 2 cups canned, frozen, or cooked vegetables.

To a hamburger casserole boxed mix—reduce the fat in ground beef by draining fat from cooked ground beef and then placing beef in a colander over a bowl and rinsing with warm water (1 quart per pound).

For dessert—serve sliced canned or fresh fruit instead of a sweet baked product.

For a boxed macaroni and cheese—use half (or omit) the butter or margarine.

For a boxed brownie mix—substitute an equal amount of unsweetened applesauce for vegetable oil (such as ½ cup unsweetened applesauce for ½ cup vegetable oil); substitute 2 egg whites for each egg.

Tip #3

SAVE TIME

MEAT

To quickly cook chicken—use microwave to thaw chicken breasts just enough so that you can cut into strips or cubes. Finish cooking in non-stick pan on the stove top.

To form patties for burgers—shape ground meat into a log and partially freeze; cut the meat into slices of preferred thickness.

Put meat intended for stir fry in freezer for 45 minutes to 1 hour to make slicing easier.

For meat and poultry marinades—use lemon juice, flavored vinegars or fruit juice mixed with herbs.

Cook extra bacon and freeze it for later use. Or, buy cooked bacon (or pieces) and store in refrigerator or freezer.

Bake meatballs in a foil-lined pan (instead of “frying”).

Chilling homemade soup causes the fat to rise to the top and harden so it is easy to remove.

VEGGIES

Buy chopped frozen green pepper and frozen onion.

If you need only ½ onion, save the root half; it will last longer.

Use potato flakes for mashed potatoes.

Wrapping potatoes in foil before baking traps moisture and steams the potatoes.

Keep uncooked potato slices from discoloring by soaking in water to which lemon juice has been added.

SPICES

Keep dried onion, celery, and parsley on hand to put in soups and casseroles.

Buy chopped garlic in a jar and store in refrigerator (one teaspoon equals one clove).

To make cracker crumbs—place crackers in a heavy-duty zip-top bag and roll with a rolling pin.

GEAR

Use two sets of measuring cups and spoons so you can measure consecutive ingredients without repeated washing.

Use kitchen shears to “chop” canned tomatoes in the can.

Use a pastry blender to slice hard-cooked eggs or mash avocados.

Use a pizza cutter to slice dough or to cube bread for croutons.

Line the broiler pan with aluminum foil before cooking for easier cleaning.

Keep cottage cheese fresh longer by refrigerating the carton upside down.

Ice cream stays fresh longer if you press wax paper against the surface and reseal the carton.

Keep brown sugar soft by storing in refrigerator in a plastic bag.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN IT'S TIME TO EAT?

- A. Stop at a restaurant on your way to wherever you need to be next.**
- B. Pick up food at the grocery store or deli on your way home.**
- C. Pull an “emergency” meal from your freezer and reheat it.**
- D. Serve a meal from your slow cooker.**
- E. Whip up something from your well-stocked pantry.**
- F. Any of the above, depending on how much planning you've done.**

Every choice has a cost in hours and minutes and in dollars and cents.

Every choice impacts your health. Planning ahead increases your choices.

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