

# Healthy Meal Planning for Busy People

## 3 Easy Steps to Healthy Meal Planning:

### STEP 1: Assess your health, nutrition and fitness goals, needs and preferences.

- Keep a food journal for at least 1 week to identify your eating habits and preferences. This exercise provides valuable insights for creating a personalized and effective meal plan.
- Determine your calorie and macronutrient needs. Use an app to track your food intake: MyFitnessPal, Google Fitbit, Cronometer, Yazio, Lose It!

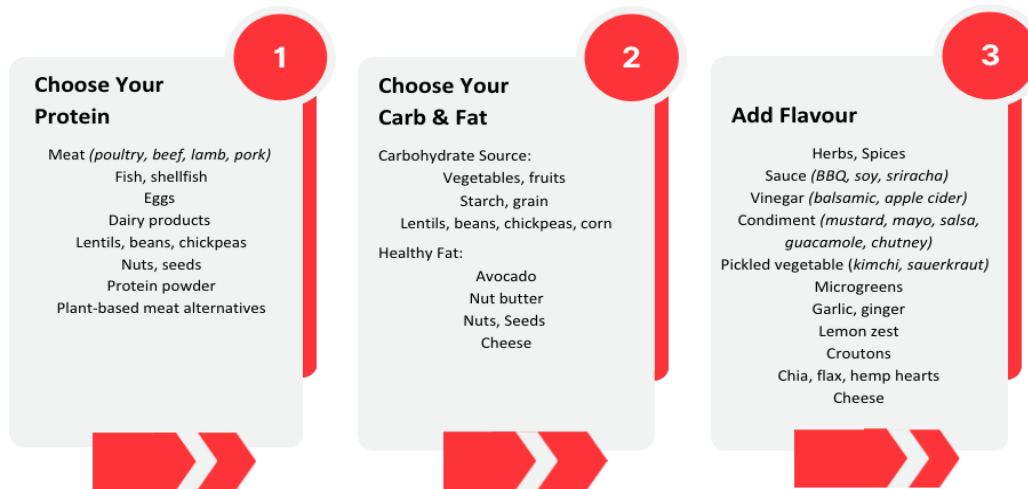
ACTIVITY: What are your top 3 goals, concerns or considerations related to meal planning?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### STEP 2: Plan ahead. Create a weekly menu plan.

Decide *what* to eat:

- On the weekend, take a few minutes to create a meal plan for the upcoming week. To keep it simple, focus on planning only dinners. Breakfast and lunch tend to follow a regular pattern. Include leftovers whenever possible.



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Keep a running list of your favourite meals for ideas. Post it on your fridge or mobile device.

ACTIVITY: Write down two meals that you and your family enjoy.

- 1.
- 2.

Assign specific themes to each day of the week:

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	SUN
Meatless Monday	Taco Tuesday	Whatever Wednesday	Leftover Thursday	Fish Friday	Slow Cooker Saturday	Stir Fry Sunday
Mexican Monday	Traditional Tuesday	Waffle Wednesday	Throwback Thursday	Family Fun Friday	Breakfast for dinner Saturday	Sheet pan Sunday

Decide *when* to eat:

Meal timing (*chrononutrition*) refers to the specific times of day when meals and snacks are consumed. Your eating schedule works with your body’s biological rhythms to regulate metabolism, blood glucose levels, sleep, mental alertness, and energy levels.

- Build meals around your schedule and exercise.
- Eat, exercise and sleep at the same time each day.
- Consuming more calories at breakfast and lunch, and fewer calories at dinner is conducive to metabolism and digestion (which is more robust early in the day).
- Avoid late-night eating. It is linked to impaired metabolic function.

Eat breakfast like a king  
Lunch like a Prince  
And dinner like a pauper

Other important elements to include in your meals:

- Colourful foods provide vitamins and antioxidants.
- Fibre-rich foods, such as vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and legumes. M: 30-38 g/day; F: 21-25 g/day
- Probiotic and prebiotic foods for microbiome support.
- Enzyme-rich foods: raw vegetables, salads, fresh fruit, raw nuts and seeds, microgreens, and sprouts.



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A simple way to create a meal plan is to build meals around macronutrients. Use this template as a guide:

Breakfast	Morning Snack	Lunch	Snack	Dinner
Larger meal	*If needed*	Larger meal	*If needed*	Small meal
20-30 g protein, plus fibre source	Carbohydrate snack + 5 g protein	20-30 g protein, complex carb, and healthy fats	Protein snack	20-30 g protein, non-starchy vegetables

### STEP 3: Shop for Groceries and Food Prep.

- Prepare a grocery list based on your menu.
- Prepare ingredients ahead of time:

1

**Batch Cook a Protein**

Examples:

- Grill chicken breasts
- Grill salmon fillets
- Cook a large pot of ground beef or lentils
- Prepare a large mixed bean salad
- Boil a carton of eggs
- Marinade meat

2

**Batch Cook a Starch**

Examples:

- Cook a package of quinoa or couscous
- Boil 2 c. brown rice
- Roast a sheet pan of sweet potatoes

3

**Prepare & Store Vegetables**

Examples:

- Refrigerate washed & sliced vegetables in a container of water
- Wrapped washed lettuce in paper towels
- Grill or roast vegetables
- Bake spaghetti squash

4

**Build Your Meals**

- Stir-fry
- Layered salad
- Wraps
- Pasta & meat sauce
- Hearty soup or stew
- Curry
- Meat & veggie skewers

### Time Savers

Sheet Pan Meals	Stir-Fry Meals
Herb & Garlic Chicken Tenders & Lemon Garlic Potatoes Honey Soy Salmon & Green Beans Chipotle Lime Shrimp & Veggies Harissa Chickpeas & Potatoes Honey Balsamic Pork Chops & Sweet Potatoes	Chicken or Beef Teriyaki Stir-Fry Honey Garlic Salmon Stir-Fry Sweet Pork Stir-Fry Shrimp Fried Rice Veggie Noodles with Peanut Sauce

# Healthy Meal Planning for Busy People

**Batch Cooking:** Prepare larger quantities of meals in advance, portion them out, and store them for later. This strategy saves time and ensures that healthy meals are at the ready.

<i>Prepare a large portion of:</i>	<i>Use for:</i>
Grains and legumes (quinoa, rice, lentils, bean salad) Bolognese or meat sauce Salad dressing (homemade) Hard boiled eggs (boil 6-12 eggs) Soup or stew Roasted vegetables (peppers, onions) Roasted tomatoes Shredded chicken Pork shoulder	Main course, salads, layered salad, side dish, soup Chili, spaghetti, pasta, chili dogs, tacos, casseroles Salads, grain dishes, marinade for meat/fish Breakfast, egg salad sandwiches, salads Lunch, dinner, side dish Salad topping, omelette, pizza, side dish Pasta, sauces, omelettes, salads Pasta, wraps, salads, over nachos Sandwiches, pasta, wraps, stir-fry's

### Healthy Snacks

SAVOURY	SWEET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cottage cheese, tomatoes, avocado, sprinkled with pepper + chili flakes</li> <li>• Turkey lettuce wraps, hummus</li> <li>• Hard-boiled egg</li> <li>• Black bean salad</li> <li>• Shredded chicken, tomato slices, avocado</li> <li>• Toast, avocado, rotisserie chicken or salmon</li> <li>• Raw nuts (handful)</li> <li>• Hummus, raw veggies or seed crackers</li> <li>• Celery, nut butter</li> <li>• Edamame</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cottage cheese, berries, sprinkled with cinnamon</li> <li>• Trail mix</li> <li>• Greek yogurt, berries</li> <li>• Fresh fruit, nut butter</li> <li>• Smoothie or protein shake</li> <li>• Banana, peanut butter, hemp hearts</li> <li>• Greek yogurt, protein powder, peanut butter</li> <li>• Coconut chips</li> <li>• Dark chocolate</li> </ul> <p>DIY trail mix: Any combination of nuts, seeds, dried fruit, coconut chips, cereal, dark chocolate chips, dried chickpeas, wasabi peas, or popcorn</p>

### NOTES:

