

Meal planning

You can complete the highlighted fields on this form online and then print the form for easy reference. Only text that is visible on the form is printed; scrolled text will not print. Any text you enter into these fields will be cleared when you close the form; you cannot save it.

Meal planning is deciding in advance what you will eat for a period of time (generally 1 to 2 weeks). It is best to eat three meals a day, and if the time between meals is longer than 4 to 5 hours, consider adding a healthy snack. Planning your meals can help you eat more nutritiously, reduce trips to the grocery store, save time at the store, and save money.

Menu planning tips

Use the menu planner and grocery list shown below as you follow these steps:

1. Get out your cookbooks and plan several main meals. Make a list of these menu ideas on a menu planner. Plan some quick meals for busy nights. You also can double some recipes that freeze well, and save half for other busy nights when you don't have time to cook.
2. Check your pantry for all the ingredients called for in recipes. Write down all the ingredients you need to purchase. If you notice you are running low on certain basic items, put these on your grocery list as well.
3. Now fill in foods that you use to make breakfast, lunches, and snacks, such as eggs, cereals, breads, tuna, milk, and juice. List plenty of fruits and vegetables.
4. Post this list on the refrigerator and add to it as you run out of foods or think of other things you need.
5. Take the list to the store and stick to it. You save money by not making impulse buys. However, you don't need to be so rigid that you pass up a good sale item.
6. When you get home, cut out and post the menu planner in your kitchen. You may want to write down page numbers from recipe books for quick reference. This way, whoever gets home first can start dinner.

The first few times you do this, it will seem like a fair amount of work. But the rewards are worth it, and you will become faster at the planning process. You can even save some of the menus and grocery lists and use them again in a few weeks.

Menu planner

Plan your meals for at least 3 days.

	Breakfasts	Lunches	Dinners
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			

Grocery list

Write down any basic food items you need and the ingredients for your meals.

Reorganize this list, if needed, to match your grocery store's layout.

Produce	Bakery/bread	Baking, oils, seasonings	Pasta, grains, dry beans
Ethnic	Canned foods	Condiments	Deli
Frozen	Cereals/snacks	Paper/plastic	Milk, cheese, yogurt, dairy
Pets	Beverages	Laundry, cleaning	Other