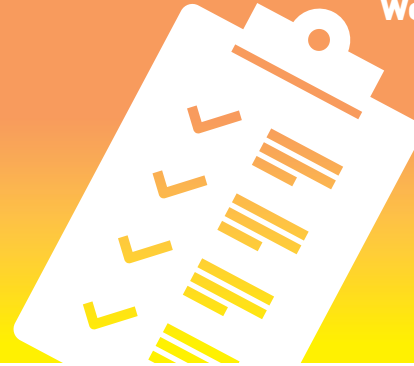


Plan Ahead

Healthy Eating, Healthy Life
Workplace Challenge



An initiative of Human Resources in partnership
with the Workplace Wellness Committee

Plan Ahead

Thinking ahead about your meals and snacks can help you make healthier choices, save time when grocery shopping, get meals ready faster and reduce food waste. This week's challenge is to plan your meals ahead to enable you to enjoy healthy home-cooked meals and snacks in no time.

MEAL PLANNING

Meal planning is thinking ahead about what you will prepare for meals and snacks and getting organized. The time taken up front to plan can help you:

- **Make healthier choices when preparing meals and snacks.** It helps you to think about the different types of foods that you will be consuming during the week and ensuring that you have a variety of healthy food options available in order to get the nutrients needed for optimal health.
- **Save time.** Meal planning can help you make the trip to the grocery store more efficient and/or reduce the last minute shopping spree. It can also be helpful in planning for large batch cooking and alternate dishes to make with leftovers.
- **Save money.** By having a grocery list and sticking to it, you will be less likely to make spontaneous purchases of foods that you do not need, which may go to waste if unused.

Pantry Staples

- eggs
- ready-to-eat salad
- frozen vegetables such as peas, broccoli, kale, peppers and green beans
- tomato sauce (reduced sodium)
- whole grain pizza dough or corn tortillas
- canned beans and lentils (no salt added)
- plain Greek yogurt
- nut butter such as peanut butter
- chicken or vegetable broth (no salt added)
- all-purpose flour
- onions (white and red)
- garlic
- ginger
- Dijon mustard
- vinegar: rice, cider and/or balsamic
- extra virgin olive oil or canola oil
- butter/margarine
- soy sauce (sodium reduced)
- spices and herbs: curry powder, ground cumin, ground cinnamon, cayenne pepper, chili powder, Italian herbs, oregano, mint, basil, onion powder, garlic powder, hot pepper flakes

Source: <https://www.heartandstroke.ca>



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TIPS FOR THE GROCERY STORE

Planning your meals and snacks for the week before going grocery shopping can help you ensure that you have all the ingredients needed at home to prepare healthy meals and snacks.

- Write down your meal and snack ideas for the week.
- Take stock of what you have in your fridge, freezer and pantry.
- Identify items that you will need to buy and prepare a grocery list.
- Read the nutrition facts table and select the healthiest options (those that are high in fibre, low in saturated fat, sugar and sodium) and buy plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Keep your kitchen stocked with healthy ingredients such as
 - soup broth to add flavor to your meals
 - bagged leafy greens to make an easy salad
 - herbs and spices to add flavour
 - pre-cut vegetables to use for snacks and stir-fries
 - canned tuna or salmon to add to salads or sandwiches
 - frozen or canned vegetables to make a quick side dish
 - canned chickpeas and lentils to toss into soups, salads or main dishes
- Ask the butcher to trim your meat, fish or poultry to your specifications. For example butterfly chicken breasts to cut the cooking time in half.
- Check the cooking time when you buy rice, noodles and other grains. Look for small or thin whole grain noodles such as spaghetti or macaroni rather than rotini or linguine which take longer to cook. Select parboiled brown rice rather than brown rice.
- Buy pre-cut or spiraled vegetables to save time.

TIPS TO SAVE COOKING TIME

Some days of the week are busier than others. To reduce the meal preparation time:

- Do some additional preparation work when you can. For example, fill containers with cut vegetables, such as celery, broccoli, mushrooms and peppers to use for stir-fries or salads during your busy nights.
- Cook once and eat twice. For example, cook a double portion of rice for your stir-fry and use the extra to make rice pilaf another day. Cook twice the amount of chicken, ground beef or turkey that you need for a particular meal and use the extra to make enchiladas, chili or spaghetti sauce.
- Become a big batch cook. Batch cooking simply means making meals and snacks in bigger batches and freezing them in smaller portions for convenient weekday meals. This can save you time and money. Healthy homemade options that are ideal for batch cooking include chili, soups, stews, casseroles, pasta dishes, and spaghetti sauce.
- Use time-saving tools. Try a mini chopper to quickly dice up garlic and onions, a hand blender to make quick and easy soups and sauces, a slow cooker to cook food while you are busy during the day, and a pressure cooker to reduce cooking times and make meals faster.

Following healthy eating practices can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight and lower the risk of developing many chronic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

For more information go to www.uwindsor.ca/healthyeating