

Meal Planning and Prepping Tips

Be ready to cook healthy meals

The key to cooking consistently healthy food on a smart budget is planning and preparation. Instead of worrying about every day's exact menu down to the serving size, meal planning can simply be a way to ensure that you've got pantry, fridge, and freezer staples on hand to whip up healthy, well-balanced meals. Saving yourself or your family from having to resort to take-out or restaurant meals will be a boon for your budget and your health goals!

- **SCHEDULE** a weekly trip to the grocery store or explore curb-side pickup or online ordering with delivery to save time.
- **SHOP** your pantry first. Base your weekly recipes on what you've already got on hand to save time and money.
- **PREPARE** a grocery list that has specific recipes in mind and stick to it.
- **COME** home with more than a bag of good intentions! Chop those vegetables up and store in containers ready for use. Plan to use them on nights when your schedule is most pressed for time.
- **ESTABLISH** theme nights to help with planning and variety. Have a healthy pizza night, a slow-cooker day, or a soup and sandwich night.
- **PICK UP** broccoli slaw for salads. Broccoli slaw is precut, tastes great, and keeps well.
- **MAKE** a simple vegetable soup. Freeze soup in zip-top bags lying flat on a cookie sheet. This will stack easily, and the soup is healthier than canned soup.
- **COOK** shelf-stable spaghetti squash and serve with pasta sauce for a quick Italian dish.



IMAGE: ADOBE STOCK

- **PRECOOK** staple ingredients for a veggie bowl. Include a grain, such as quinoa, couscous, or brown rice. Precook a vegetable, such as roasted broccoli. Or dig into the frozen veggies you keep stocked in your freezer.
- **SUPPLEMENT** precooked grains and veggies with an easy protein, such as boiled egg or cheese. Voila! You have a healthy meal!

Meal planning and prepping will save you time and money in the long run. If you find it a challenge to carve out a space for them, though, consider turning it into a treat. Take your meal prep time to listen to that podcast you've been saving or the audiobook you borrowed from the library. Invite a friend over to fellowship in the kitchen with you while you both tackle your meal preps, or even claim the meal planning and prep time as much-needed alone time! Whatever your strategy is, your budget and your health will thank you.

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