

HUMAN PERFORMANCE CENTRE

Want to Know More About Meal Planning? We Can Help!

I often get asked about meal planning in my practice and personal life. People generally like the idea of meal planning but have trouble getting started.

What are the advantages of meal planning?

- Having a grocery list which makes for easy shopping and avoiding to buy food items that you might not need or are less nutritious
- Staying within a budget when grocery shopping
- Having a plan what foods to prepare on a daily basis cuts down your dinner making time and creates less opportunities to craze through your cupboards while looking for something to cook
- Eating balanced meals on a daily basis
- Cuts down on food waste

The following tips give you some great ideas how to jump start your meal planning:

- Consider the 4 food groups of Canada's Food Guide. They are Vegetables and Fruit, Grains, Dairy and Proteins. Plan to eat foods from all food groups at every meal to achieve meal balance and to ensure you get all the

nutrients you need. Elaborate cooking skills are not required to eat healthy balanced meals. For example, a tuna sandwich with raw vegetable sticks and a glass of milk is a balanced meal and quickly prepared.

- When making a meal plan for yourself or an entire family, rely on the meals you already prepare and that your family enjoys. Add more variety by trying new ingredients in the same recipe such as adding different vegetables or using a different type of protein.

- When you start meal planning, gather those go to recipes and sit down as a family. Meal planning is a family affair. Everyone has their favourite meals they would like included in the meal plan rotation. Plan to try one new recipe per week for more variety and exploring new meals and foods that your family usually doesn't eat.

- Make a grocery list based on the recipes you planned for the week to help you stay on track and on budget when heading to the grocery store.

- Save time and money by planning for leftovers. You can always cook extra portions of meats that can be used another day in salads, sandwiches or soups. You can also precook large batches of pasta or rice, freeze in portions and use another day to save cooking time. Try to cook large batches of soups, stews and casseroles that will yield leftovers for lunches or another meal later in the week. A slow cooker can save a lot of time in the kitchen. All you need to do is prepare all your ingredients, add them to the slow cooker in the morning and your meal will be done by the time you return home.

- If you have minimal time to prepare a meal every day of the week, it can be helpful to take an hour or two on the weekend to cut up vegetables for the entire week, or precook some meals.

- If you usually eat out on a particular day of the week, plan for this day on your meal plan and mark it down. If you don't eat outside the home regularly but would like a flexible day to accommodate unscheduled outings, family gatherings, etc., mark this on your

meal plan as a 'whatever' day.

Whether you want to create a meal plan for just suppers, or lunch and suppers, or even for all three meals and snacks, you will soon find out that having a plan makes our busy lives just a little easier.



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