

Meal Planning Guide



What is meal planning?

- Meal planning is the practice of planning one (or more) of your day's meals in advance
- It can be as regimented or flexible as you'd like! Options include:
 - **Meal planning day-by-day** (this tends to work if you have a more flexible schedule)
 - **Meal planning for 2-3 days** by preparing ingredients in advance and then mixing and matching them when meal time comes (ex. pre-cooking chicken and quinoa, pre-chopping vegetables to put into a container for lunch, etc.)
 - **Meal planning for the week** - dedicating one afternoon or evening a week to preparing meals that you can reach for during the week (this works well for people with busy schedules)
- Meal planning can also account for days where you'd like to order-in or eat leftovers. The main goal of meal planning is to have an idea, whether general or specific, of what you will be eating for a certain period of time.

Why is it helpful?

- **Reduces stress** - no more "What should I eat tonight?"
- **Saves time** - streamlining your cooking efforts will free up time in your week (plus, less dishes!)
- **Saves money** - typically, the price per home cooked meal is less than buying takeout or pre-made meals.
- **More nutritious meals** - oftentimes, we reach for takeout meals out of convenience. Meal planning ensures you have easy access to balanced meals at all times.
- **Reduces food waste** - meal planning allows you to get a better sense of what you need each week, so say goodbye to wilted lettuce and spoiled foods!

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Nutrition Basics

Follow these tips to ensure you're getting the right amount and type of food at each meal. Check out the next page with ideas for each category!

For each meal, aim for:

- **1/2 plate vegetables and/or fruits**

- Focus on non-starchy vegetables like leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, zucchini, cucumber, etc.
- Aim for 1/2 plate of fruit with one meal (ex. breakfast) and 1/2 plate of vegetables for the other two meals (ex. lunch and dinner)

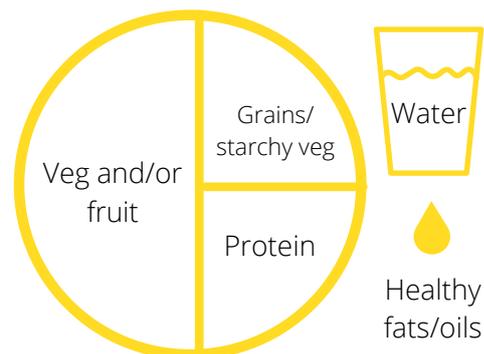
- **1/4 plate grains or starches**

- Include high fibre grains like whole grain/whole wheat bread, quinoa, bulgar, whole wheat couscous, etc. or starchy vegetables like sweet potatoes or squash

- **1/4 plate protein foods**

- Focus on lean protein sources more often like poultry or fish, with red meat only occasionally
- Incorporate more plant-based proteins (ex. tofu, beans, chickpeas, lentils)
- Protein foods can also include dairy products like milk or yogurt, or protein powder if you're making a smoothie

- **Include a serving of healthy fats at each meal**



For snacks, try to include a source of protein and a source of fibre

- **Protein snack foods** - yogurt, cheese, nuts/seeds, nut butters, hummus, eggs
- **Fibre snack foods** - fruits, vegetables, whole grain granola bars, whole grain crackers, pretzels, popcorn

Remember that this is a general framework - no need to make every meal 'perfect'. As long as most of your meals look like the plate above, you're good to go!

Build a Meal

Here's some ideas of foods to include in each section of your plate!

Protein Foods - aim for 20-30g of protein at each meal, this looks like:



3 oz chicken, fish, pork, beef



1 cup firm tofu



1 1/4 cups beans/legumes



2 eggs + 2 egg whites



1 cup Greek yogurt



1 scoop protein powder

Grains & Starches - include 'whole grain' options more often

Brown Rice



Whole grain breads

Oats

Quinoa

Barley



Corn



Whole wheat pasta

Butternut squash

Potatoes/Sweet potato

Vegetables & Fruits - try to include one leafy green and one orange vegetable daily

Carrots



Broccoli



Asparagus

Banana



Kale

Cauliflower

Bell Peppers



Apples

Spinach

Brussel Sprouts



Tomatoes

Berries

Fats - aim for a small portion (about 1-2 tablespoons) at meals or with snacks

1/4 - 1/2 Avocado



1 small handful nuts and seeds



Olive oil



Cheese



Easy Meal Prep Recipe

BURRITO BOWL WITH AVOCADO LIME DRESSING



Makes 5 servings/containers

Ingredients:

For chicken:

- 680g (1.5 lbs) chicken breast*
- 1/3 cup fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp honey
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp paprika
- 2 tsp cumin
- 2 tsp chili powder (optional)

For bowl:

- 3 1/2 cups rice of choice (white, brown, wild)**
- 1 can of black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup corn kernels
- 1 cup tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro (optional)
- Juice of 1 lime (optional)

For dressing:

- 2 avocados
- 2 cups Greek yogurt
- 2 cups cilantro, chopped
- 4 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp garlic, minced
- 2 tsp cumin

1. Place the chicken in a large bowl or resealable bag along with all "for chicken" ingredients. Coat the chicken well, cover, and marinate in the fridge for 1 hour. Once marinated, preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. Bake the chicken for 15-18 minutes or until cooked through (should reach an internal temperature of at least 165F). Slice into bite size pieces and set aside.
2. Cook rice according to package instructions and prepare remaining "for bowl" ingredients.
3. To make dressing, place all ingredients in a blender or food processor and combine until smooth. Adjust seasoning as needed.
4. To assemble, place equal amounts of rice in 5 airtight containers, top each one with chicken, black beans, corn, diced tomatoes, cilantro and lime juice. Store in the fridge until ready to eat. The dressing can be stored in a separate container and added right before eating.

Notes:

- *Chicken can be replaced with the protein of your choice, such as fish or tofu
- **Rice can be replaced with another whole grain, such as quinoa, barley or farro
- To up the veggie content, you can add a handful of leafy greens into the mix!