



## Keep In Mind...

Begin with smaller, attainable goals – you don't need to start by "doing it all".

If relying on restaurant or takeout meals have figured prominently in your life for many years, attempting to make 100% of your meals at first might feel too overwhelming and is not likely to last long.

Also, if your pocketbook takes a hit because you buy a large amount of food and you're too overwhelmed, or too tired, to cook then you're not likely to keep up this important weight-management strategy.

## To Begin: The Basics

### Make it a Routine

- Plan to sit down on the same day, at the same time each week if possible, to plan your menu; protect this time - write it down in your calendar- make it a standing priority
- Include time on your calendar for grocery shopping and prepping certain foods ahead of time
- This may seem overwhelming at first, but after a while it will become more of a healthy habit and will guarantee saving time later in the week and often its great for your budget and waist line!

### Start Simple

- Begin by planning the meals that are most challenging for you! Focusing on one meal per day makes the idea of meal planning a bit less daunting
- Write down 2-3 options to rotate through for each meal and add these to your master list
- As you start to get more comfortable, consider planning and prepping other meals throughout your week



### Utilize a Meal Planning Sheet

- Consult your calendar and notate the days that have a tighter meal schedule due to scheduled events. Make simpler meals on these days or eat leftovers or pre-prepped meals
- List, on your planning sheet, the recipe source, page or website AND approximately how much time is needed for preparation. You could also utilize a white board or smart phone App to keep track of your recipes and help with planning. *Start with planning a protein, vegetable and possibly a whole grain for each meal*
  - Make meals with easy perishable ingredients (like: leafy greens, fresh meats and seafood) earlier in the week and save the meals made with longer-lasting foods (like: root vegetables, eggs, peppers, and beans) for later in the week

### Backwards Meal Planning

- Don't underestimate the power of Google- enter the ingredients you have on hand (in the refrigerator, freezer, pantry or cupboards) that you want to use and do a 'healthy' recipe search  
*Note: there are many different definitions of 'healthy' so be discerning*
- This method of planning is great for the budget and lessens food waste - a 'win-win'!
- Don't forget to plan Insta-Pot or Crockpot cooking for the times when quick meals are necessary
  - Make larger batches of freezable meals  
*Veggie lasagna made with zucchini slices, chili, stews and soups can be portioned out to save money and reduce waste*

## Enlist the Help of Others With Meal Preparation

- Why not get *everyone* who eats involved? In a household of eaters, meal planning is everyone's opportunity, not just one person's job/role or problem. What a great skill to pass on, model, practice and enjoy with loved ones! It can even be fun!
- Divvy up the week- have different members of the family/ household be in charge of meal(s) during the week
- Keep in mind that teens will benefit from learning how to cook in a healthy manner- a skill they'll use for the rest of their lives!
- Younger children can help by washing produce, peeling, and cutting with a plastic knife



<https://www.lifehacker.com.au/2016/12/what-to-do-when-meal-planning-never-seems-to-work-for-you/>



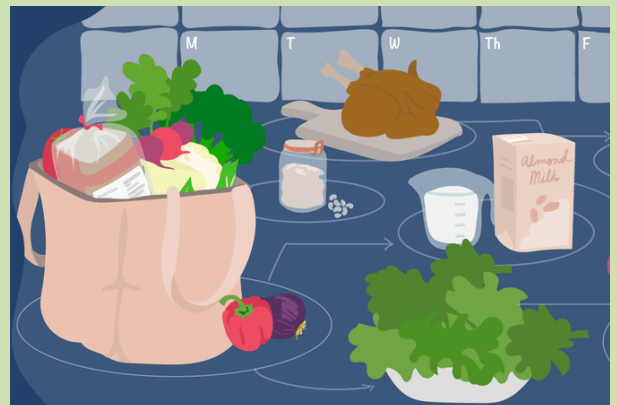
<https://betweencarpools.com/this-is-my-easy-menu-plan-for-the-month/>

## Keep it Fun!

- Consider coming up with themes for some nights of the week such as:  
  
*“Meatless Monday”, “Taco Tuesday”, “Wok Wednesday”, etc. (get creative!)*
- Allow for occasional healthy take out or restaurant meals (consult online menus ahead of time to plan for healthy choices)

## Note Regarding Your Shopping List:

- Put healthy snacks on your list (for you and your family members)
- Add in quick prep vegetables: steamables (be aware of added sauces), prewashed bagged vegetables or salads
- Plan for the unplanned: stock up on healthy staple items for quick, unplanned meals such as:



<https://www.verywellfit.com/5-day-diabetes-meal-plan-4142797>

Low sodium soups & broth, frozen vegetables & fruit, low fat/sugar yogurt or plain yogurt (Greek has more protein), whole grains, nut butters, reduced-fat cheese, ground turkey or chicken, canned beans, low sodium canned, or dried, beans/lentils, canned tuna/chicken/salmon, no-sugar added fruit cups