Meal Prepping
Starter's Guide

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This is NOT a balanced meal.
This is okay some of the time.
What is Meal Prep?

- Planning and prepping all of your meals for your week ahead.

- This includes:
  - Menu planning
  - Shopping
  - Prepping
  - Cooking
  - Portioning
  - Storing
You will need:

Time

OR

$$$$

AND

Creativity
Why Meal Prepping?

- Convenient
- Healthy
- Cost-effective
Where to Start:

- Plan a menu for your entire week, including all meals and snacks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast</strong></td>
<td>1/2 cup yogurt, black coffee</td>
<td>1/2 cup yogurt, black coffee</td>
<td>1/2 cup yogurt, black coffee</td>
<td>1/2 cup yogurt, black coffee</td>
<td>1/2 cup yogurt, black coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Snack 1</strong></td>
<td>1/4 mixed nuts, 1 cup berries</td>
<td>1/4 mixed nuts, 1 cup berries</td>
<td>1/4 mixed nuts, 1 cup berries</td>
<td>1/4 mixed nuts, 1 cup berries</td>
<td>1/4 mixed nuts, 1 cup berries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Snack 2</strong></td>
<td>2 Tbl Ranch dressing, 1 cup baby carrots</td>
<td>2 Tbl Ranch dressing, 1 cup baby carrots</td>
<td>2 Tbl Ranch dressing, 1 cup baby carrots</td>
<td>2 Tbl Ranch dressing, 1 cup baby carrots</td>
<td>2 Tbl Ranch dressing, 1 cup baby carrots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dinner</strong></td>
<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
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<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
<td>4 oz. chicken, 1/2 cup rice, 1 cup veg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common Conversions:</strong></td>
<td>8 oz. = 1 cup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 oz. = 1 lb</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Grocery Store Ads Can Help Make Your Menu

- For instance, if I see that bell peppers and ground meat (beef or turkey) is on sale, I would likely make chili or stuffed peppers that week.
Meal Planning Tips and Budget-Saving Tricks

- When planning your meals, look at grocery store ads and in-season food items to incorporate into your menu.
- Incorporate ingredients that can pull double-duty, like oats (smoothies, overnight oats, oatmeal, muffins)
- Freeze meal portions from previous weeks to add into future weeks' rotations.
- Stock your pantry and freezer.
Tips on Navigating the Grocery Store

- Stick to the perimeter of the store.
- Look for items with in-season and sale tags.
- Get produce and protein first.
Prep Day

❖ Prep can consist of:

- chopping and portioning ingredients for later use
- cooking large dishes at once and storing individual portions for later
- stocking your pantry and freezer with easy, go-to ingredients and snacks.
Prep Day

- Now that you have your meal plan for the week and you have done your grocery shopping, it's time to prep!

- Efficient prepping can take some time and practice, so be willing to have some trial and error your first couple of tries.
Prep Day Tips and Tricks

- Start slow. If cooking all of your meals and prepping all of your snacks for the week in one day feels overwhelming, try starting with just prepping one meal for each day or prepping for just 3 days of the week.
Prep Day Tips and Tricks

- Start with the meals that have the longest cooking time first, like meals that need to be cooked in the oven or a slow cooker.
- While those longer meals are cooking, you can prep other ingredients and work on quicker stove cooking or microwaving.
Prep Day Tips and Tricks

- Have your storage containers cleaned and readily available so that you can quickly portion out your meals as you finish cooking them.
Storage Containers

- Glass vs. Plastic
  - Glass is typically more durable and can be safer to reheat food in.
  - Plastic is typically more cost-effective and can be good to store snacks and food that does not need to be reheated.
  - Plastic can also be good to freeze food items in, as well as appropriate freezer zipper storage bags.
Storage Containers

- Segmented containers for convenient ingredient separation without needing multiple containers.
Prep Doesn't Always Mean Cooking

- Chop veggies and fruit for easy snacks or meal additions.
  - Tip: These can also be frozen for smoothies.
- Measure out portions of snack foods, like nuts.
Prep Doesn't Always Mean Cooking

- Put a casserole together in a baking dish for an easy weeknight dinner that just needs to be thrown into an oven on a busy evening.
If you don’t want to prepare items yourself . . .

Plan to spend the money on pre-packaged, pre-portioned items
Now that we've talked about the mechanics of meal prepping, what about the content of your meals?
Meal Prep Food Safety

- Cook and cool all foods properly
  - Cook foods to proper minimum internal temperatures, and cool foods quickly to avoid the temperature danger zone, in which bacteria can grow well.

- Reheat foods properly
  - Heat food through in the microwave and consume readily.
Meal Prep Food Safety

❖ Store foods properly
  ▪ Use food grade containers and store cooked or prepped food at the proper fridge and freezer temperatures. Consume within 3-4 days.

❖ Pack food to go in insulated containers and consume within 2 hours
Nutritious and Balanced Meal Prep

- Include a variety of food groups in each meal and snack.
  - Include lots of colors on your plate.
  - Try to have at least 3 food groups present at each meal and 2 at each snack.
Nutritious and Balanced Meal Prep

- Appropriate portion sizes.
  - Be sure to look at serving sizes on packaging, and utilize resources on MyPlate.gov to help determine the right portions for you.
  - Different sized storage containers can help make this easy for you!
MyPlate Plan
Find your Healthy Eating Style

Everything you eat and drink matters. Find your healthy eating style that reflects your preferences, culture, traditions, and budget—and maintain it for a lifetime! The right mix can help you be healthier now and into the future. The key is choosing a variety of foods and beverages from each food group—and making sure that each choice is limited in saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Start with small changes—“MyWins”—to make healthier choices you can enjoy.

Food Group Amounts for 1,800 Calories a Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fruits</th>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Grains</th>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 1/2 cups</td>
<td>Focus on whole fruits</td>
<td>Vary your veggies</td>
<td>Make half your grains whole grains</td>
<td>Vary your protein routine</td>
<td>Move to low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1/2 cups</td>
<td>Focus on whole fruits that are fresh, frozen, canned, or dried</td>
<td>Choose a variety of colorful fresh, frozen, and canned vegetables—make sure to include dark green, red, and orange choices.</td>
<td>Find whole-grain foods by reading the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list.</td>
<td>Mix up your protein foods to include seafood, beans and peas, unsalted nuts and seeds, soy products, eggs, and lean meats and poultry.</td>
<td>Choose fat-free milk, yogurt, and soy beverages (soy milk) to cut back on your saturated fat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 ounces</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 ounces</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 cups</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. Limit:
- Sodium to 2,300 milligrams a day.
- Saturated fat to 20 grams a day.
- Added sugars to 45 grams a day.

Be active your way: Children 6 to 17 years old should move 60 minutes every day. Adults should be physically active at least 2 1/2 hours per week.
# Portioning Your Meals and Snacks

## Daily Food Group Targets — Based on a 2,000 Calorie Plan

Visit SuperTracker.usda.gov for a personalized plan.

### Fruits
- Focus on whole fruits and select 100% fruit juice when choosing juices.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, canned, or fresh, so that you can always have a supply on hand.

### Vegetables
- Eat a variety of vegetables and add them to mixed dishes like casseroles, sandwiches, and wraps.
- Fresh, frozen, and canned count, too. Look for “reduced sodium” or “no-salt-added” on the label.

### Grains
- Choose whole-grain versions of common foods such as bread, pasta, and tortillas.
- Not sure if it’s whole grain? Check the ingredients list for the words “whole” or “whole grain.”

### Dairy
- Choose low-fat (%) or fat-free (skim) dairy.
- Get the same amount of calcium and other nutrients as whole milk, but with less saturated fat and calories.
- Lactose intolerant? Try lactose-free milk or a fortified soy beverage.

### Protein
- Eat a variety of protein foods such as beans, soy, seafood, lean meats, poultry, and unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Select seafood twice a week. Choose lean cuts of meat and ground beef that is at least 93% lean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Example Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>1 cup counts as: 1 large banana, 1 cup mandarin oranges, ½ cup raisins, 1 cup 100% grapefruit juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>2 cups = 1 cup counts as: 2 cups raw spinach, 1 large bell pepper, 1 cup baby carrots, 1 cup green peas, 1 cup mushrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains</td>
<td>6 ounces = 1 ounce counts as: 1 slice of bread, ½ cup cooked oatmeal, 1 small tortilla, ½ cup cooked brown rice, ½ cup cooked grits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>3 cups = 1 cup counts as: 1 cup milk, 1 cup yogurt, 2 ounces processed cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>5½ ounces = 1 ounce counts as: 1 ounce tuna fish, ¼ cup cooked beans, 1 Tbsp peanut butter, 1 egg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Food Group Example: Breakfast

- Dairy, grains, fruit
- Protein, dairy, vegetables

Rule of 3
Meal Ideas: Breakfast

- Overnight Oats or Oatmeal
- Healthy muffins (using banana or applesauce)
- Omelets in a mug
- Egg Muffins
Meal Ideas: Snacks

- Fruit and nuts
- Smoothies
- Veggie sticks and dip
- Protein bites
Meal Ideas: Lunch & Dinner

- Turkey stuffed peppers
- Bunless burgers
- Creative salads
- Any combo of meat, carbs, and veggies
Super simple

- Cheese sticks
- Apples/Bananas
- Granola bars
- Nuts
- Smoothies
- Dry cereal
Simple

- Yogurt
- Oatmeal
- Oranges & other fruit
- Mini pancakes
- French toast sticks
- Hard cooked eggs
Muffin Pan Ideas

- Muffins
- Pancakes and sausage
- Egg casseroles/quiche
- Hash browns or biscuits as crust
- Ham or bacon as crust

Just about any mixture of egg, meat, cheese and bread/starch!
Tortilla Ideas

- Burrito – quesadilla – roll-up
- Cinnamon, banana & nut butter
- Fruit and cheese
- Eggs and peppers
- Sausage and eggs
Hand Pies

- Fruit pies
- Filled pancakes
- “Hot” pockets 😊
- Scones
More Ideas

- Waffle sandwiches
- Loaded toast
- Bagels
- Yogurt parfaits
Mason Jar Meals

- Veggie salads
- Fruit salads
- Pasta salads
- Pasta & sauce
- Soup or chili
One-hand Meals

- Pepperoni rolls
- Pita pockets
- Tortilla rolls
- Empanadas
Side Dishes

- Fresh veggies or fruit
- Fruit snacks/leathers
- Trail mix
- Crunchy snacks
And more . . .

- Cheese and crackers
- “Planned” overs
Common Pitfalls

- What if I get towards the end of the week, and I'm tired of the food that I prepped?
- What if I go out to eat for a meal instead?
- What if I don't have time to grocery shop/prep on my usual shopping/prep day?
Common Pitfalls

- Where do I find recipes/tips to keep me excited to prep each week?
- What if I don't use all of the ingredients that I bought to prep?
Wrap Up:

- Meal prep is a great way to have convenient and nutritious meals at home.
- Plan your menu and shopping list.
- Shop smart, keeping grocery sales and coupons in mind.
- Prep efficiently all at once, which may take some practice. Don't give up!
Wrap Up:

- Store items properly, and travel with food safely.
- Remember to stock your pantry and freezer as you go to help save you time later.
- Use items that can pull double-duty.
- Get creative, and have fun with it!
Free Resources for Tips and Recipes
What do YOU do to help with meal prep?
What questions do you have?
Thank you!
Resources:

- Livesmartohio.osu.edu (Blog)
- Livehealthyosu.com (Blog)
- Youtube.com/user/southcenters/playlists (Telecasts)
- Celebrateyourplate.org (Online recipes and videos)
- Ohioline.osu.edu (Fact sheets)
- Choosemyplate.gov (Nutrition tools)
- Whatscooking.fns.usda.gov (Recipes)