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Planning meals

Planning is the Key to Weight Management

It's the building block of other essential skills like problem solving and goal setting. Planning ahead decreases your susceptibility to emotional or environmental cues that could lead to poor food and activity choices. Planning meals is an excellent tool to keep your food plan on track and build confidence in your weight management skills.

The best way to control your nutrient and calorie intakes is to plan and prepare all of your own meals, but this is impractical for most people. Successful meal planning involves identifying meals you will eat out, those you will prepare from scratch, and the occasional use of packaged or prepared products such as frozen meals and OPTIFAST® Nutrition Products. The easiest way to approach planning is to look at it meal by meal. Before you decide what you are going to eat, consider current dietary recommendations, your schedule, budget, and cooking equipment.

What is the Best Diet?

Aim for a Leaner, "Greener" Plate

For two decades, health experts have advised Americans to reduce the saturated fat and cholesterol in their diets by eating less meat and full-fat dairy products and more whole grains and greens. Americans then enthusiastically embraced low-fat foods and ate an abundance of carbohydrates. Unfortunately, they filled up on super-sized servings of refined carbohydrates, worsening the national obesity epidemic. To better manage your weight and health, it is recommended to choose vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans and eat

tools for success

- Understand the role of planning in weight management.
- Develop a list of preferred meals and identify ways to assure they are low-fat and balanced.
- Develop strategies for eating a healthy breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks.
- Make an informed choice about adopting alternative eating patterns (e.g., vegetarian).

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fewer and smaller servings of processed refined carbohydrates. At least half of the grains you eat each day (a minimum of 3 servings) should be whole grains.

Whole grains are less processed or refined than other products so vitamins, minerals and fiber are preserved in the product. Whole grains have added texture and flavor and are slowly digested, which may help you feel full longer between meals. Examples of a one-ounce serving of whole grains include $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup high fiber, ready to eat cereal, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oatmeal, 1 slice whole wheat bread, and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked brown rice or whole grain pasta, and 3 cups microwave (80% light) or air popped popcorn.

When you shop for whole grains, look for the words "100% whole grain" on the product labels and check the ingredient list, looking for the word, whole, in the description. Look next at the dietary fiber line of the nutrition facts panel. Choose whole-grain products with 3 grams of fiber or more per serving.

These dietary strategies improve weight control, reduce the risk of heart disease, may help normalize glucose levels and provide other important health benefits. They are incorporated into the 2005 versions of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. (For more information, see www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines and view the Food Guide Pyramid at www.mypyramid.gov.)

The Mayo Clinic Healthy Weight Pyramid (<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-diet/NU00190>) is a calorie-wise adaptation of the popular 1992 USDA Food Guide Pyramid and incorporates the key 2005 Dietary Guidelines concepts and other valuable tips in a single, easy to follow pyramid. The Mayo Pyramid emphasizes fruit and vegetables over grains, suggests healthy choices in each food group, limits sweets to 75 calories/day, and calls for increased daily activity.

Meal Planning Tips

Practice portion control. The Portion Distortion game at <http://hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/portion> can help you learn appropriate portion sizes.

Aim for a greener plate. Cover $\frac{2}{3}$ of the dish with plant-based foods (whole grains, fruits, and vegetables). Make sure at least half of the grains you eat are whole grains. Fill the remaining third with a source of lean protein.

Fill up on low-calorie fruits and vegetables first. Beginning a meal with a low-calorie salad or clear vegetable soup cuts total calorie intake.

Control variety. It is a double edged sword for many weight managers; the more choices and variety in your diet, the greater the temptation to overeat. Early in the long-term management phase of weight management, choose 2 basic breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. Add variety by eating a wide selection of vegetables and fruit in your daily diet. Gradually vary other aspects of your diet.

Eat several different colors of produce each day. The various pigments in fruits and vegetables provide important health benefits. Visit <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/> for details.

Combine protein and carbohydrate at each meal or snack. The quantity you eat will depend on your calorie level for the day and the stage of transition or long-term management you have reached.

Remember, **fat is a concentrated source of calories.** Controlling total fat intake improves calorie control and weight management. Choose small portions of heart-healthy fats such as olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, trans-fat free margarines, nuts, seeds, avocado, and nut butters.

Eat less animal fat to significantly cut saturated fat and cholesterol intake and reduce your risk for heart disease. To reduce the animal fat in your diet:

- Choose lean cuts of meat, poultry, fish, skim or 1% milk and low-fat cheese products.
- Replace some of the red meat in your diet with fish, skinless poultry, and plant based protein such as tofu and soy. Aim for two servings of fish a week.
- Meat is a valuable source of iron, zinc, protein and other nutrients, but a little goes a long way. Aim for no more than 6-7 oz of cooked meat a day. One serving of meat is about 3 ounces (roughly the size of your palm or a cassette tape).

Frequently choose meatless meals. Be careful about replacing meat with eggs, cheese, and other high-fat dairy products. Many people cut their meat intake, but add fat back to their diet by increasing their cheese consumption. Use plant-based foods to totally or partially replace the animal products in your diet. Use eggs and low-fat cheese sensibly. For more information about increasing your intake of plant-based foods, see the American Institute for Cancer Research's website at www.aicr.org.

Remember change takes time. If you and your family are used to a meat-centered diet, allow yourselves time to gradually develop a taste for new ingredients, food combinations, preparation methods, etc. Try one new item a week until you have a set of recipes you and your family enjoy.

The Vegetarian Option

Properly planned meatless meals are lower in fat, especially saturated fat and cholesterol, and higher in complex carbohydrate and fiber than the traditional American diet. The composition of meatless meals can help reduce blood cholesterol and C-reactive protein levels, significant risk factors for heart disease. For these reasons some people decide to follow a vegetarian diet. Creating a nutritionally balanced totally vegetarian diet requires special planning. If you are interested in adopting this type of eating plan, consult your program dietitian or contact the American Dietetic Association (ADA) at 800-877-1600 or www.eatright.org. Their website has suggestions for helpful books and brochures on the subject. You

may also find useful information on the Vegetarian Resource Group's website at www.vrg.org.

Break the Fast with a Quick Breakfast

Breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day, yet at least 25% of Americans try to get by without it. Research shows skipping breakfast makes it harder to get all the nutrients you need, slows your reaction time and productivity late in the morning, and compromises weight control. According to the National Weight Control Registry (NWCR), the majority of successful weight managers eat breakfast. With some advance planning, it is easy to make breakfast a part of your family's daily routine. If you insist you have no time for breakfast, rethink your priorities and your schedule. Here are some strategies to get your day off to a fast and healthy start:

Be prepared. The night before, decide what you want for breakfast, then do as much of the preparation as practical. For example:

- Get out the cereal, bowls, and utensils.
- Set up the coffee.
- Make the juice or a fresh fruit salad.
- Set your alarm to get up 10-15 minutes earlier so you will have time to eat.

Keep it simple. The traditional bacon and eggs breakfast is high in fat and calories. Going to a drive through or grabbing coffee bar treats adds on the calories, fat, and cholesterol. A bowl of ready-to-eat whole grain cereal (one that is low in sugar and has at least five grams of fiber per serving), served with one cup of skim milk and one cup of fruit, is simple and nutritious. For a quick change replace the cereal with a low-fat, high fiber frozen waffle topped with vanilla yogurt and fresh fruit.

Be flexible. There is no rule that says you have to have traditional breakfast foods in the morning.

Save the clean up for later. Just rinse the dishes and stack them in your sink or the dishwasher to wash with your dinner dishes.

Make it portable. If you find that even with getting up earlier, you can't seem to have breakfast and make it

out the door on time, take it with you.. Portable breakfast ideas include:

- OPTIFAST 800® Ready to Drink or Bar
- Fat-free or lowfat yogurt or a yogurt smoothie
- Single serving carton of low fat cottage cheese
- Part-skim mozzarella cheese stick
- Whole wheat mini-bagel spread with peanut butter
- Baggie of ready-to-eat whole grain cereal, a few nuts, and raisins
- Individual serving of hot cereal
- A piece of fruit
- A sandwich
- Leftovers from the night before

Light Lunches

Lunch is your major mid-day refueling opportunity. A well-balanced lunch can keep you energized throughout the afternoon. Lots of fats and calories lurk in the typical restaurant lunch foods. Since most Americans eat this meal away from home it's a common obstacle to maintaining a healthy weight. The challenges of eating lunch out include not knowing how restaurant food is really prepared (just how lean is the lite tuna salad?); being restricted to eating establishments close to your worksite (including fast food, cafeteria, or all-you-can-eat restaurants); and trying to achieve a sense of relaxation and satisfaction when eating a small serving of healthy foods in the chaotic lunch rush environment. Bringing your own lunch solves many of these issues.

Better Brown Bagging

Make it convenient:

- Use prepackaged, low-calorie foods, including frozen meals for convenient, nutritious lunch entrees. You may need to supplement these entrees with skim milk and additional

vegetables, fruit, and salads depending on your meal plan and calorie level. (Check the Nutrition Facts on frozen meals as many are high in sodium. Aim for less than 500 mg/ serving).

- Prepare lunches the night before as you are cleaning up from dinner.
- Cook extra servings of dinner so you will have leftovers for lunches.
- Buy single portion sized storage containers that can go from freezer to microwave.

Make it safe, using safe food handling practices:

- Use thoroughly cooked foods that only need reheating to reduce your risk of becoming infected with bacteria from undercooked food, and thoroughly reheat your lunch.
- Keep foods cold. Remove food from the refrigerator as you leave home and refrigerate it as soon as you get to work. If a refrigerator is not available, use ice packs with an insulated bag or cooler.
- Keep food containers clean, washing them daily.

On those occasions when you eat out for lunch, use the skills you have already learned in this program to help you make great choices.

Dinners in a Dash

Not long ago people looked forward to dinner as the most significant meal of the day, as well as the time of day during which families reconnected. The upsurge in two career couples, longer commutes, and kids with packed after school calendars have done away with the family dinner hour in many households. Doing away with dinner as the main meal has not done away with the calories, however.

Most people have replaced traditional dinner menus with grab and go foods that are often filled with fat and calories. According to the National Weight Control Registry data, the

majority of successful weight managers run counter to the national trend. They prepare most of their own meals, including dinner, and many have reclaimed the dinner hour as a time to reflect and recharge.

With more family members working outside the home, dinner needs to be simple to prepare. Rethink your concept of dinner. Replace the traditional three-course meal with hearty soups, meal sized salads, and quick one-dish meals. Learn a few new cooking techniques and have a good idea of the healthy, but fast-to-fix foods available in your grocery store.

Tour your local grocery store looking for healthy but quick choices. Choose a few health conscious frozen meals and select ready to eat salad blends, fruit platters, or light vegetable soups to round out these meals. Search the produce section for ready to cook vegetables such as peeled potatoes, shucked corn, peeled baby carrots, broccoli and cauliflower florets. Look for quick fix side dishes like whole wheat couscous or quinoa that can cook in 5-15 minutes. Or serve hearty whole grain bread in place of a starchy side dish.

Have a few 15-minute meals in mind. A variety of healthy meals can be created with a roasted chicken from the service deli. Pair it with a deli fruit tray and a loaf of 7-grain bread for a meal in minutes. Use any left over chicken to make sandwiches for the next day's lunch. Extra chicken can also be used to make a delicious lean fajita for the next night's dinner. Just combine it with sliced red and green bell peppers, some Mexican seasonings, and wrap it up in a whole grain tortilla.

Make good use of your prep time. Involve family members in the meal preparation and clean up process. While one person sets the table, get another to slice some fresh fruit. Serve it after dinner topped with a dollop of low-fat vanilla yogurt.

Action Plans

Planning meals makes you less susceptible to inappropriate eating cues. Preplanning can relieve the stress of having to make spontaneous, unplanned choices and the feelings of disappointment and self doubt that can follow a poor choice. Planning helps you stay positive in your weight management efforts. It also helps you prepare for another important food management task—grocery shopping.

Grocery Planning Pointers

- Run through your week's meal plans to identify and list the foods/ingredients you will need to prepare the meals.
- Do an inventory of the foods/ingredients that you already have on hand. Cross these items off your list.
- Create an organized shopping list by grouping like items together (i.e., list all produce items together, all dairy case items, etc.).
- To prevent impulse buying, shop when you are not hungry or use a grocery shopping website delivery service if it is available in your area.
- Visit the www.supermarketsavvy.com website for more helpful tips and trends.

Now it's your turn to plan healthy food choices that are satisfying to you.

Healthy Food Choices

Instructions

To adopt healthy eating habits, planning is the key to being successful. In the space provided below, list at least two different low-fat foods you are likely to eat for each meal in each of the food categories. Don't forget to include healthful food options you can easily find when you need to eat out.

Key	S	Starch	Fr	Fruit
	M	Meat or meat substitute	Mk	Milk
	V	Vegetable	F	Fat

Breakfast	Option 1	Option 2
1 S		
1 M (lean)		
1 Fr		
1 Mk (skim)		
1 F		
Lunch	Option 1	Option 2
2 S		
2 M (lean)		
1 V		
1 Mk (skim)		
1 F		
Dinner	Option 1	Option 2
2 S		
3 M (lean)		
2 V		
1 Mk (skim)		
1 F		
Snack	Option 1	Option 2
1 Fr		

Healthy Food Choices

Instructions

Please duplicate this page for multiple day planning. When you receive an individualized meal plan, use this form and number of exchanges specific to your plan.

Key	S	Starch	Fr	Fruit
	M	Meat or meat substitute	Mk	Milk
	V	Vegetable	F	Fat

Breakfast

1 S

1 M (lean)

1 Fr

1 Mk (skim)

1 F

Lunch

2 S

2 M (lean)

1 V

1 Mk (skim)

1 F

Dinner

2 S

3 M (lean)

2 V

1 Mk (skim)

1 F

Snack

1 Fr