News Release

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Planning for Quick Healthy Meals

What do you do when it’s “time to eat”?
  a. Stop at a restaurant on your way to wherever you need to be next.
  b. Pick up food at the grocery store or deli on your way home.
  c. Pull an “emergency” meal from your freezer and reheat it.
  d. Serve a meal from your slow cooker.
  e. Whip up something from your well-stocked pantry.
  f. Any of the above, depending on how much planning you’ve done.

Fast foods, frozen pizza, carry-out meals, all are popular quick meals; some even have healthy options. Every choice has a cost in hours and minutes and in dollars and cents. Every choice impacts your health. Planning ahead increases your choices.

Healthy foods can be part of any schedule and cooking style. Planning is the key to creating menu options that fit your lifestyle.

Stock up on the basics. Smart shopping puts the ingredients you need where you need them, in your cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer. Think about the foods you like to serve (or want to serve). Use the following list as a guide to create your own master shopping list.

In the cupboard:
  • Spaghetti, macaroni, other pasta
  • Packaged biscuit baking mix
  • Ready-to-heat sauces and reduced fat, reduced sodium soups
  • Rice, barley, lentils, split peas

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• Potatoes, onions
• Canned fruits, vegetables, beans, tuna
• Canned and bottled fruit and vegetable juices
• Salsa, seasoning and sauce mixes, and other condiments
• Cooking oil, non-stick spray

In the refrigerator and/or freezer:
• Fresh and frozen vegetables, baby carrots, pre-torn salad greens
• Fresh and frozen fruit and fruit juices
• Frozen chopped onion and green pepper
• Tortillas, pita bread, pizza crust, bagels, ready-to-bake rolls, whole grain bread, English muffins
• Cheese (grated, sliced), yogurt, cottage cheese, milk, eggs, margarine
• Cooked sliced meat or poultry, fish, ground meats
• Skinless, boneless chicken and/or turkey breasts
• Cooked pasta, rice, bulgur, barley

The easiest way to serve a healthy meal is to use the proportions suggested by Choose My Plate (www.choosemyplate.gov). A healthy meal starts with more vegetables and fruits and smaller portions of protein and grains. Don’t forget dairy—make it the beverage with your meal or add fat-free or low-fat dairy products to your plate. You can add small amounts of fats, oils, or sweeteners (such as margarine, butter, salad dressing, vegetable dip, sugar) to enhance flavors.

Visit http://www.choosemyplate.gov and click on healthy eating tips for sample menus and recipes. You will also find a -day menu that gives an example of how all of the recommendations for food group and nutrient intake can be integrated into a weekly menu.

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