

A MEAL PLAN GUIDE

Save money, save time, and stay healthy

Plan your meals with a grocery list to save money and time and avoid buying things that you don't need (processed foods)! It is also a great way to engage your children in preparing foods together.

Grocery stores often have a lot of distractions because they want you to buy foods that usually don't provide good quality nutrition. Think: fruits and vegetables never have packaging unless they in salad box, but snacks and desserts are almost always in colorful boxes to get your attention.

5 Key money saving tips for optimal nutrition

1. Plan meals based on what is already in your pantry and fridge
2. Make a grocery list and stick to it
3. Choose seasonal fruits and vegetables
4. Buy in bulk for some foods (beans, nuts, seeds, meat)
5. Freeze some foods for longer shelf life and optimal nutrition

8 Key questions to ask while making the grocery list

If you are not used to making a grocery list, this could take up more than 1 hour in the beginning. As you become more familiar with the routine, it could take as little as 10 minutes to develop your grocery list!

1. Diet restrictions?
 - a. Does any family member have diseases/conditions that require diet restrictions?
 - b. Does any family member have trouble chewing that requires modified texture?
 - c. Does any family member have allergies or intolerances?
 - d. What does the nutritionist/doctor recommend eating or not eating?
2. What is in my fridge and pantry?
 - a. Is there leftover that has been around for more than 3 days? Throw them away.
 - b. Is anything expiring soon? Can you make something with them next week?
 - c. Keep a running list of foods in your pantry, fridge, and freezer. This will help you keep track of ingredients available to you to avoid wasting food (and money!)
3. What is my budget for the week?
 - a. If you are low on budget, look for frozen fruits and vegetables or soy-based products. They are not only cheaper but also more nutritious more often than fresh produce that has been on the shelf for a long time.
4. What fruits and veggies are in season?
 - a. Using **"What's in Season?" handout**, pick at least 3 different fruits and 3 different veggies for the week
 - b. Seasonal produce tends to be cheaper and more delicious. If you have enough budget, buy some of the season produce in bulk and freeze them for use in the next

few months. This saves money and time in the long run! Read **"Freezing fruits and vegetables saves money and time"** to find out more.

- c. Vegetables: choose at least 1 dark-green vegetables, 1 red or orange vegetable, and 1 starchy vegetable. Other choices include beans & peas and others like mushroom.
- d. Fruits: choose different color fruits
- e. Fruits for desserts: sweet ones for special treats ("*Salt Reduction Guide*" for more)
5. Are we in peak season for my favorite fruits and vegetables?
 - a. Does my freezer have space to store some frozen F&V?
 - b. Do I have time to do such preparation this week?
6. Consider a variety of protein throughout the week
 - a. Non-meat option: If you do not eat meat or would like to eat less meat, consider egg, and different types of minimally processed soy products including tofu
 - b. Fish: Try to have at least 2 meals with fish throughout the week
 - c. Meat and poultry: Find a balance between lean and non-lean meat.
 - i. Plan for 2/3 of your lunch and dinner with lean meat and 1/3 non-lean meat.
Fatty fish like salmon is considered non-lean meat
 - d. Depending on the time of the day, you might have many or few options of meat to choose from. Be flexible and choose the pieces of meat that look the freshest
 - e. To estimate how much meat to buy: a palm size is a meal worth of meat
7. Rice dish: Can I shop for some root vegetables and other grains to cook with the rice?
 - a. See handout for suggestion—**Healthy Swap: Rice Combo**
8. How do I know I am buying enough?
 - a. Use the **"Serving Size In Hand"** guide to estimate at the grocery stores!
 - b. On average, everyone should have 2 pieces of fruits daily, 3 cups of veggies daily 6 ounces of meat daily, and 1/3 cup of grain/rice

Daily needs:

- Fruits: 2 pieces of whole fruit, 2 cups (c) of cut/small fruits
- Vegetables: 2 ½ cups of raw root or cooked vegetables, 5 cups of leafy vegetables
- Grains: 3 cups cooked rice/porridge/mixed grain, 3 cups of cooked noodles, 3 slices of bread
- Protein: 6 eggs, 3 cups of tofu, 6 ounce of meat, 6 tablespoon (tbsp) of peanut butter, 6 cups of soymilk, 18 dumplings

*How much is 1 cup? How much is 1 ounce? Check out the [handout *Serving Size in Hand*](#)

Sample one-person meal plan:

Food Group	Mon	Tues	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Fruits	1 Apple 1 cup grape	1c Watermelon 1 orange	1 Apple 1c pineapple	1c Watermelon 1 orange	1 Apple 1 cup grape	1c Watermelon 1c pineapple	1 Apple 1c cherries
Veggies	1c cubed pumpkin 1c chopped broccoli ½c chopped onion	2c raw spinach 1 large tomato 0.5c raw mushroom	2c raw Tatsoi 1c bitter melon 0.5c wood ear	1c cubed pumpkin 1c chopped broccoli ½c chopped onion	2c raw spinach 1 large tomato 0.5c raw mushroom	2c raw Tatsoi 1c bitter melon 0.5c wood ear	1c cubed pumpkin 1c chopped broccoli ½c chopped onion
Grain	2 slice whole- grain bread 2c rice	1/4c barley 1c rice 1c noodle	1 meat bun 1c rice 1c noodle	2 slice whole- grain bread 1c rice	1 meat bun 1c rice	1/4c barley 1c rice 1c noodle	1c congee 1c rice
Protein	2 eggs 1c soymilk 1/2c tofu 2oz ground pork	1 egg 1c soymilk 1tbsp peanut butter 2 drumstick ¼c mung beans	1c soymilk 2oz ground pork 2oz tilapia	1 cup soymilk 1tbsp peanut butter 1c tofu 2 drumsticks 3 dumplings	1 egg 1 cup soymilk 12 dumplings	1 egg 1 cup soymilk ¼c mung beans 3oz Salmon	1 egg 1 cup soymilk 1tbsp peanut butter 3 oz ground pork