

Meal Planning 101

A Key Tool to Clean Eating
For the Whole Family



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About me:

I'm a Registered Holistic Nutritionist with a mission to help you Eat Right. Feel Better and Look Good, by offering easy, practical and sustainable dietary suggestions.

I work with stressed, busy professionals and on-the-go professionals to bust cravings, increase energy, manage weight and fix digestive issues so as to transform their health from the inside out.

I help you eat nutritiously without spending hours in the kitchen or breaking the bank on expensive health foods.



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Healthy, clean eating starts at home. With a little bit of planning and forethought the entire family can eat wholesome, nutritious meals most days of the week- thus meeting everyone's needs for taste, variety, nutrient balance and nutrient richness.

Why Plan Meals?

- For quick and easy meal preparation
- It saves a ton of time
- Family involvement- so everyone's needs and choices are catered to
- Includes everyone's favorite meals/ dishes
- Fresh ideas can be brain stormed, so you break the cycle of eating the same old boring foods.
- Allows for inclusion of a variety of foods and food groups.

Understanding the nutrients and their role in our body

The foods we eat are categorized as macronutrients and micronutrients.

Macronutrients: are the big/ large foods which we consume and provide us with calories. They include: Carbohydrates, proteins and fats

Macronutrients: are the smaller nutrients we get when we consume the macronutrients. So basically these are vitamins and minerals.

For example: when you eat carrots the macronutrient here is carbohydrate, however it also give you Vitamin A and beta-carotene which are micronutrients.

Let's take a quick glance at the functions and examples of these nutrients.

Fluids here have been treated as a separate category as hydration is a very crucial aspect of clean eating which many people ignore.

Nutrient	Function	Examples
Carbohydrates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy • Preferred fuel for muscles and brain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veggies and fruits • Grain products • Milk and alternatives • Beans and legumes
Proteins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muscle building • Muscle repair • Formation of cells and hormones • Immunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meat and alternatives • Beans and legumes • Nuts and seeds • Milk and alternatives
Fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy • Insulation • Protection of organs and nerves • Coating of nerve conductors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olive oil • Coconut oil • Walnut oil • Avocado oil
Vitamins and Minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metabolic functions • Immunity • Cell nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veggies and fruits • Meats • Whole grains
Fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste removal • Transport of nutrients • Regulating body temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Milk/ alternatives • Juices (fresh)

The Steps in Meal Planning

1. Check your calendar & mark the following

- Weekly commitments- soccer, dance, piano, meetings so you can see the free/ available slots of the week when you can shop for groceries, prep and even cook some meals ahead of time.
- No cooking days: These are the days you simply have no time to cook at home, so you will need premade dishes at meal time.
- Quick cooking days: These are the days where you only have a short time between activities/ commitments. So having pre-cut veggies, pre-marinated meats or slow cooker recipes already in the works are the best choices.
- Eating out days: For example, in my family we generally tend to eat out on Saturday evenings. It's a no cooking night for me- yay!

2. Decide the menu (all meals and snacks) for 1-2 weeks at least.

3. Organise all the recipes

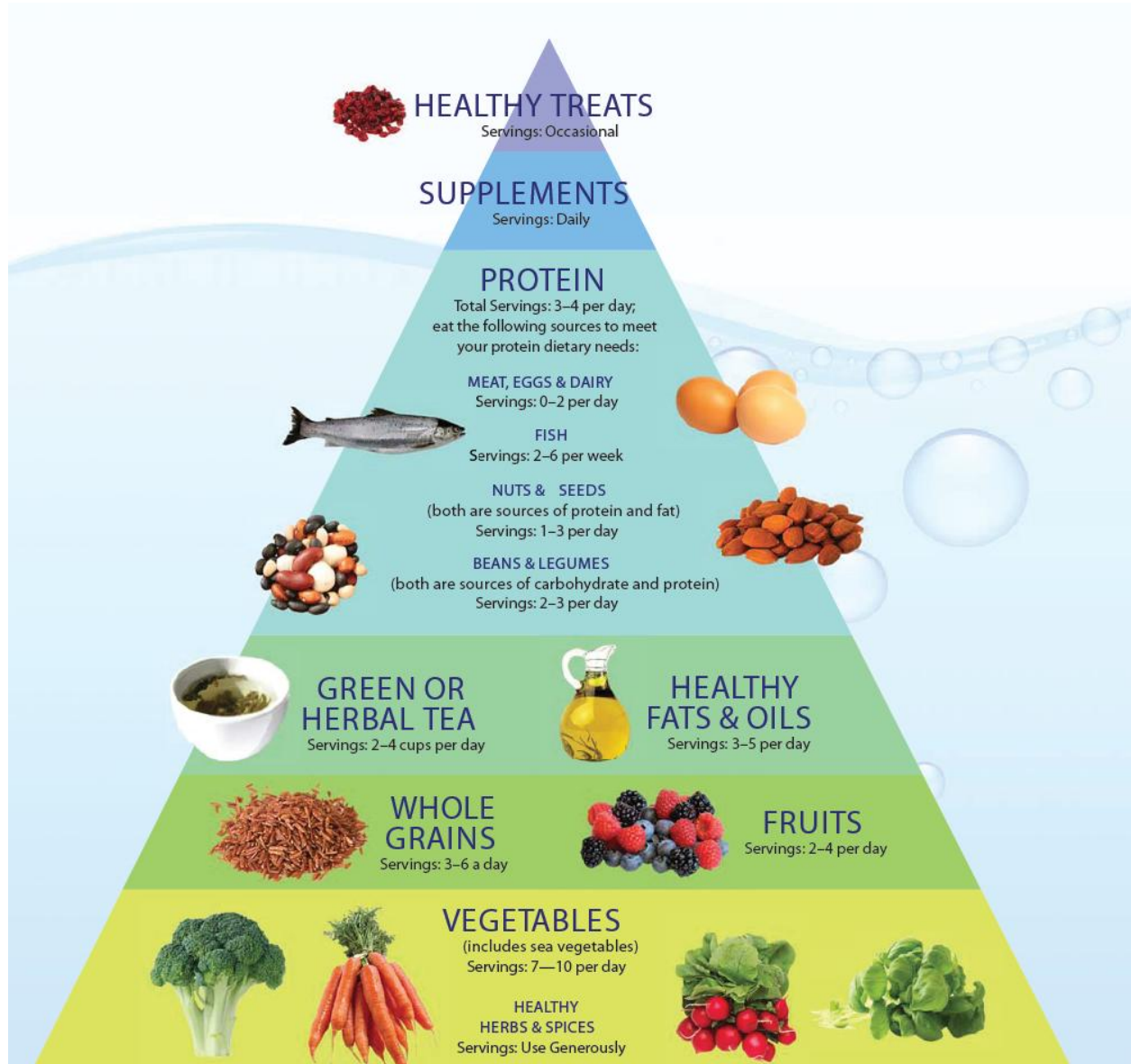
- Make recipe cards for easy access
- Color code them: for example vegetarian dishes on green cards, meat dishes on red cards, drinks and beverages on yellow cards
- Keep collecting recipes from internet/ magazines/ other websites by book marking as you browse through them
- You can take a print out and file them under different categories or if bookmarking online create a folder and sub folder based on categories.
- **BONUS TIP: when printing or collecting recipes make sure to note down the source, in case you need to go back to it any anytime!**



4. Desirable Food Pyramid Guide

Use the below food pyramid to guide you about how much of which macronutrient you should be consuming in a day.

Note that the base (widest part of the pyramid) is vegetables, not grains!



5. Create the weekly menu plan:

1. Next decide and write down each meal you will have for a week on a table like the one below. (There is an example started for your ease as well).
2. Hang it on the fridge for everyone to see and follow

BONUS TIP: since this is the most crucial and time consuming part of the series, it's best to create menu plans for 2 weeks. That way you are set for a longer time, you can always switch recipes and meals to create new meal plans!

Meal	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
Breakfast	Smoothie	Scrambled Egg+ toast					
Snack	Carrots + hummus						
Lunch	Steamed fish + mashed pototo						
Snack	Apple and peanut butter						
Dinner	Salad + chicken wrap						

6. Prep the food ingredients:

From your calendar exercise you already know which days and times you have in the week for this. So all you have to do is:

- Pre-cut veggies and bag them, or
- Buy pre-cut veggies
- Chopping, steaming, puree, batch cooking

You can ask everyone in the family to pitch in, as this makes for a great way to spend time with each other and bonding.

If you have little kids, it's amazing how much they enjoy 'helping mommy/ daddy' cook the meals they are going to eat. Many of them boast about it at school or to friends. Win-win!

5. Store the prepped food appropriately:

This means freezing, drying, pickling, or simply refrigerating!

If you are freezing foods, make sure to label them with the name of the dish and date it was cooked. Generally consume the food within 3 months to avoid getting sick from eating food that is too old.

BONUS TIP: Once freezing and storing becomes a habitual thing, you may find that the dishes cooked first at are stored at the back. So when digging into the stock you might want to start from the back of the fridge/ freezer.

6. Meal sharing:

This is a great way to reduce your cooking effort and enjoy a variety of foods at the same time.

Say next time you are having pot luck, make double the batch. Take one batch to eat at the event and give away another to a friend or family member. They can do the same for you!

Or perhaps, if you have family gathering where they bring in a dish for you; you can freeze that dish for later use.

There you go- the short and sweet version of meal planning!

Action Items:

- ***Prepare a meal plan for 1 week and share it next time.***

Note: It may seem like a lot of work, but trust me once you do it for a couple of times; it becomes faster, easier and fun to do. And nothing can beat the fact that your entire family is eating healthy meals at a fraction of the cost you would've spent eating out.

Told you it saves money!