

Wise Food Choices When You're Pressed for Time

Pressure...stress...time demands...family responsibilities...career demands. Many times a hectic lifestyle turns snacks into meals, the family dinner into a special occasion, and eating on the run into an everyday occurrence. This leaves less time to purchase and prepare food. No matter how fast paced your routine, you can still get nutritious meals in minutes.

A. Streamline Meal Preparation

- ❑ Use a microwave to thaw and cook meats, cook vegetables, pasta, etc.
- ❑ Buy pre-cut vegetables and/or baby carrots to eat while preparing meals, as snacks, to take in lunches, and to cook with meats.
- ❑ Broil meats, chicken, and fish. It's fast and eliminates the need to add fats during preparation.
- ❑ Keep a supply of staples on hand to avoid last minute trips to the store. Stock pasta, pasta sauce, (e.g., marinara), rice, and canned vegetables, (e.g., tomatoes), beans, and tuna.
- ❑ Prepare larger quantities. For example, if making a soup or stew, prepare enough for three or four meals and freeze in individual containers.
- ❑ Make one dish meals combining meats, vegetables, and grains to save on clean-up time. Try chili, ratatouille, or vegetable and rice casseroles and stir fries, and kabobs.
- ❑ If a frozen dinner is your meal, balance it by adding a salad, piece of fruit, and skim milk. Add canned chickpeas (garbanzo beans) to your salad.
- ❑ For a super quick meal, eat a sandwich, a bowl of vegetable or bean soup, and drink a glass of skim milk.
- ❑ Serve a nontraditional, but easy meal, for dinner. Try a stuffed potato with cut-up vegetables, plain yogurt, and Parmesan cheese, or a pizza with pizza sauce, fresh vegetables, and low-fat mozzarella cheese.
- ❑ Purchase ready-to-eat items at the deli counter and salad bar that you can eat when you get home or refrigerate and use for the next day's lunch and/or dinner. Examples are a rotisserie turkey breast half or whole chicken, tossed greens and cut-up vegetables, sliced lean meats, hummus, etc.



Add extra vegetables on a frozen pizza.

B. Choose Healthy Snacks

- ❑ Stock your kitchen with quick snack foods that are nutrient dense, such as low-fat yogurt, fresh fruit, cut-up vegetables, dry cereal, bagels, and whole grain crackers.
- ❑ Practice smart snacking with convenience foods that offer both taste and nutrition. It takes only seconds to pour a glass of milk, open a box of cereal, or wash a piece of fresh fruit.
- ❑ Practice moderation in your snack choices. Substitute fruit, yogurt, and plain popcorn for high-calorie snacks like chips and cookies. Pass on fat-free crackers and desserts. These may be lower in fat than regular varieties, but still have about the same number of calories.
- ❑ Prepare healthy snacks, such as muffins, mixed fruit, or a fresh vegetable dip with pita wedges.

C. On the Go

- ❑ Make an effort to include fruits and vegetables. Order skim milk with your meal.
- ❑ Pack a piece of fruit in your briefcase or purse for an afternoon snack or keep dried fruit in your desk drawer for an instant high fiber snack.
- ❑ Take along individually portioned juices, raw vegetables, low-fat cheese or peanut butter, and whole grain crackers.
- ❑ Opt for bottled water instead of sweetened soft drinks.
- ❑ At the vending machine, choose low-fat options like pretzels, plain popcorn, oatmeal raisin cookies, gingersnaps, vanilla wafers, or low-fat yogurt.
- ❑ When you go out for breakfast, try cereal with skim milk, waffles or pancakes with fresh fruit toppings, a bagel, or toast with fruit or juice.
- ❑ At the fast food restaurant, opt for grilled chicken, fish, or lean meat entrees. Choose a salad, baked potato, or bean chili, going light on the toppings. (See also “Choose Foods Wisely When Eating Away From Home” at www.HealthyLearn.com.)
- ❑ Order healthy “carry out” choices, such as grilled chicken, stir-fried dishes with rice (not fried noodles), pizza with a lot of vegetables and half the cheese, etc.



Have a piece of fresh fruit between meals.