

DIABETES CLINIC NEWSLETTER

Illinois Extension

Steps to Meal Planning

Meal planning is an important piece, and the first step, to eating healthy. There are four simple steps to meal planning.

1. Set aside time for planning.
2. Take inventory.
3. Plan meals and snacks.
4. Make a shopping list.

Set aside time for meal planning

First, choose whether you will shop weekly or monthly. Shopping once a week allows you to buy fresh fruits and vegetables and eat them before they go bad. Plus, it can decrease one-ingredient trips to the store. Then, choose a day and time to plan your meals. Consider planning meals the same day as when you shop or the day before so it's fresh in your mind. Better yet, write down the meals you plan to make, and bookmark the recipe pages in your cookbooks or online recipe websites so you don't forget what you are planning!

Take inventory

Take mental note of what foods you already have on hand, and foods that need to be used before they go bad. Look for recipes that incorporate these foods and include them into your meal plan. This helps to save money and prevent food waste.



Maria Lin Kim via Unsplash



Gabrielle Henderson via Unsplash

Plan meals and snacks

Plan your meals and snacks, looking up different recipes you've saved. You may wish to only plan evening meals but then stock up on different breakfast and lunch items that can be made quickly and easily. Don't just plan on the main entrée. Remember to use the Carbohydrate Counting or Plate Method tool to include side dishes without getting too much carbohydrate that can increase your blood sugars. Also, consider your schedule. Determine which days you will:

- Eat at home.
- Eat away from home, but take food with you.
- Have extra people to prepare for.
- Have more or less time than normal to prepare food. For example, on a busy day, use a slow cooker or air fryer to put a meal on the table relatively quickly. Save the recipes that are more time-consuming for a day when you are home and have more time to devote to cooking.

Make a shopping list

Write your list on paper, or use an app on your smartphone. Many corporate grocery stores will have their own app, which may include recipes, digital coupons, shopping lists, and more. Plus, if you order pick up or delivery, you can easily turn your grocery list into an order, and it saves you an extra step!

When you use the last of a common ingredient or food item, add it to the list immediately.

Eating Out

According to the CDC, 3 in 5 Americans report eating out for dinner at least once a week. There are challenges to eating healthy when eating out, however, having a plan can help you stick with your healthy diet goals.

Plan ahead

If able, know what you're going to order before you walk into the door or pull through the drive through. Many restaurants and fast food chains will have their menu and sometimes even nutrition information on their website. If your meal is missing food groups, such as fruits or vegetables, focus on including these throughout the rest of the day. Also, don't skip meals or plan on the meal eaten out to be a large meal; eating consistently spaced meals with roughly the same amount of carbohydrates will help control blood sugars.



Studies show that people tend to eat more when they're served more food, so getting portions under control is really important for managing our health.

Read the menu carefully

While you may not have full control of the food being prepared, you can ask questions to help you make healthy decisions. Consider these things:

- **What's in the dish?** Is it heavy in carbohydrates?
- **How is it prepared?** Is it baked or fried?
- **How big is the portion size?** Can I split it with a friend or take part of it home?
- **Can it be modified to be healthier?** Can I have it prepared without salt?

Menu Terminology

In general, avoid:

- buttered, buttery
- breaded and fried
- creamed, cream sauce
- Gravy, hollandaise, au gratin, scalloped, or cheese sauce

In general, look for:

- Steamed
- Baked
- Broiled
- Grilled
- Roasted
- Poached

Order wisely

- Be the first to order so others don't sway your decisions.
- Either skip the bread or chips and salsa that come before the meal, or take away a carb from somewhere else in the meal (no rice, no potato).
- Beware of items that seem healthy, but may be loaded in calories (salads with cheese, croutons, bacon, and dressing).

Sources: [CDC, Eating Out](#)
[CDC, Research to Practice Series, No. 2, 2006](#)

My Weekly Meal Plan

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

	Time of day	Carb choices or grams
Breakfast		
Snack (optional)		
Lunch		
Snack (optional)		
Dinner		
Snack (optional)		

Sunday

Questions?

Contact Jenna Smith, Nutrition & Wellness
Educator and Registered Dietitian, at
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Strawberry Spinach Salad

Yield: 6 servings



- 1 quart fresh strawberries
- 10 oz. fresh baby spinach
- 1/2 cup walnut pieces
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 Tablespoon sesame seeds
- 1/2 Tablespoon poppy seeds
- 1 1/2 teaspoons minced onion
- 1/4 teaspoon Worcestershire
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika

Instructions: Wash hands with soap and water. Wash strawberries. Remove caps and slice into halves. Combine strawberries, spinach, and walnuts in a large bowl. In a medium bowl, whisk honey, oil, vinegar, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, minced onion, Worcestershire, and paprika. Pour dressing over spinach mixture and toss.

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 250 calories, 17 grams fat, 45 milligrams sodium, 23 grams carbohydrate, 4 grams fiber, 4 grams protein

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