



# Meal Planning Made Easy



# Objectives

- Discuss meal planning and how it can impact your food choices
- Identify available tools and resources that can help in the meal planning process
- Review helpful meal planning tips from getting organized and creating shopping lists, to making meal preparation simple and fun



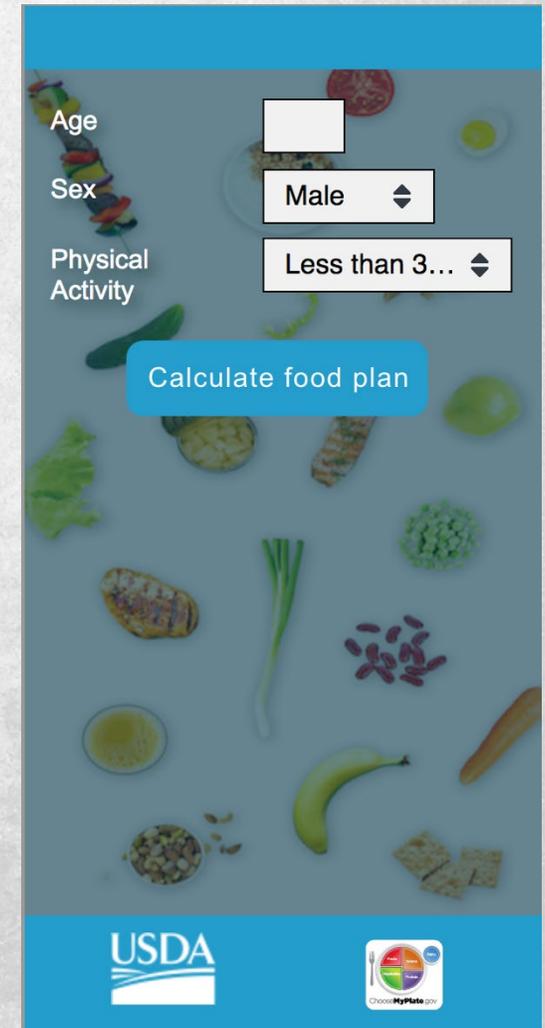
# Meal Planning

- Whether cooking for yourself or your family, planning meals is a great place to start improving your food choices
- To start, make a list of your favorite meals
  - Talk to your family and gather your favorite recipes
- Consider using helpful online resources like the MyPlate Plan tool



# MyPlate Plan Tool

- The MyPlate Plan shows your food group targets (what and how much to eat within your calorie allowance)
- Your food plan is personalized based on your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level



The screenshot displays the MyPlate Plan Tool interface. It features three input fields: 'Age' with an empty text box, 'Sex' with a dropdown menu set to 'Male', and 'Physical Activity' with a dropdown menu set to 'Less than 3...'. A blue button labeled 'Calculate food plan' is positioned below these fields. The background is a collage of various food items. At the bottom, the USDA logo and the ChooseMyPlate.gov logo are visible.

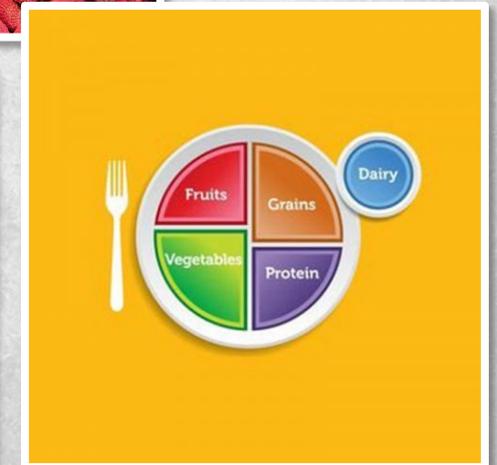


# Meal Planning Tips

- Get inspired!
- Start small
- Get organized
- Shop your pantry first
- Consider each food group
- Make a shopping list
- Buy in bulk
- Prioritize food storage and safety
- Keep a well-stocked pantry
- Practice efficiency
- Batch cook
- Plan leftovers
- Makeover favorite meals
- Save favorite recipes
- Consistently make time
- Make it fun!

# Get Inspired!

- Get out your “someday I’ll try this” recipes
- Look at cookbooks
- Try to re-create restaurant entrees
- Visit a farmers market
- Visit cooking websites
  - E.g., MyPlate Kitchen



# MyPlate Kitchen



HOME

EAT HEALTHY

LIFE STAGES

RESOURCES

PROFESSIONALS

MYPLATE KITCHEN 



WELCOME TO

## MyPlate KITCHEN

[View Recipes](#)



<https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen>



# Start Small

- If you aren't used to meal planning, the idea of it can seem daunting
- Developing a meal planning habit is no different than making any other positive change in your life
- Start small and slowly build
  - Plan out just a few meals/snacks for the week ahead
  - You'll figure out which planning strategy works best for you

# Get Organized

- Good organization is key to any successful meal plan
- An organized kitchen, pantry, and refrigerator will make meal planning, grocery shopping, and meal prep much easier





# Shop Your Pantry First

- Before you make your meal plan, take an inventory of what you already have
- Look through your freezer, refrigerator, pantry, and cabinets
- Taking an inventory will help you use what you have, reduce waste, and prevent you from unnecessary buying

# Consider Each Food Group

- Make sure each food group is incorporated in your food plan
- Follow the MyPlate guidelines
  - Make half your plate fruits and vegetables
  - Make half your grains whole grains
  - Move to low-fat and fat-free milk or yogurt
  - Vary your protein
  - Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars



# Weekly Meal Planner

 **CREATE A GROCERY GAME PLAN**  
**WEEKLY CALENDAR**

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
BREAKFAST							
LUNCH							
DINNER							
SNACKS							

**NOTES:**

---

---

---



# Make a Shopping List

- Make a list of what you need to buy for your weekly meal plan
  - Review recipes and take inventory
- Keep an ongoing grocery list and add items as you run out
- Buy a combination of fresh, frozen, and non-perishable items



# Why Use a Shopping List?

**CREATE A GROCERY GAME PLAN**  
**GROCERY LIST**

<b>FRUITS</b>	<b>GRAINS</b> (BREADS, PASTAS, RICE, CEREALS)

<b>DAIRY</b> (MILK, YOGURT, CHEESE)	<b>VEGETABLES</b>

<b>PROTEIN FOODS</b> (MEAT, SEAFOOD, BEANS & PEAS, NUTS, EGGS)	<b>OTHER</b>

**NOTES:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A shopping list allows you to:

- Stick to your budget
- Buy only what you need
- Save time
- Make healthier choices



# Buy in Bulk

- Take advantage of the bulk section at your local grocery store or consider joining a wholesale club
- Buying in bulk can help save you money while keeping staples on hand
- Load up on foods like rice, cereal, nuts, dried fruit, frozen veggies, and beans



# Grocery Shopping Alternatives

- Contact farmers directly
- Go to a farmers market
- Use a grocery delivery service or pickup
- Buy from vegetable/fruit stands
- Join a CSA
- Plant a garden





# Prioritize Food Storage and Safety

- Invest in high-quality storage containers
  - E.g., Glass is eco-friendly and microwave safe
- Store groceries and leftovers in a timely manner so that you can use them as planned for the days to come
- Keep hot foods hot (140°F or above) and cold foods cold (40°F or below)



# Keep a Well-Stocked Pantry

- For hassle-free, healthy meals in a hurry, be prepared with a well-stocked pantry:
  - **Whole grains:** brown rice, quinoa, oats, pasta
  - **Canned goods:** beans, vegetables, fruits, low-sodium broth, tomato sauce, tuna, chicken
  - **Cooking staples:** oils, vinegars, herbs, spices
  - **Baking essentials:** baking powder/soda, flour
  - **Other:** nut butters, potatoes, nuts, dried fruit

# Practice Efficiency in the Kitchen

- Choose meals you can easily prepare on your busiest days
- Use one cooking method for the whole meal
- Do prep work on less busy days
- Use pre-prepared items





# Batch Cooking

- Useful if you don't have a lot of time to cook during the week
- Prepare a large batch of your favorite recipes on your day off
- Freeze extras and save for later:
  - Burritos
  - Hearty soups
  - Casseroles and baked pastas
  - Long-cooked braised dishes and stews

# Batch Cooking



# Planned Leftovers

- If you don't get around to batch cooking, planned leftovers are a great alternative
- Make a few extra servings of your dinner to eat over the next few days
- Don't enjoy leftovers? Repurpose them!
  - E.g., Shred left over chicken and use it for tacos, soup, or salad

# Makeover Favorite Meals

- Reduce the amount of fat, sugar, and salt
- Make a healthy substitution
- Eliminate or cut back on some ingredients
- Change cooking and prep techniques





# Save Your Favorite Recipes

- Keep your favorite recipes in a designated location
  - Spreadsheet, word document, recipe box/binder
- Make notes of any edits or substitutions you made or would like to make to a particular recipe





# Consistently Make Time

- The key to integrating meal planning into your life is to make it a priority
- Regularly carve out a block of time that is dedicated to planning



# Make it Fun!

- You are more likely to stick to meal planning if it is enjoyable
- Considering making meal prep a family affair
  - Ask family to help plan the upcoming week's menu
  - Divide jobs among family members
- If you prefer to prep solo, listen to your favorite music, podcast, or audiobook





# Summary

- Meal planning is a great first step to improving your eating habits
- If meal planning is new to you, start small and make it an enjoyable experience
- Keeping your kitchen organized and your pantry well stocked will make the meal planning process much easier
- Practice efficiency in the kitchen by planning leftovers or batch cooking to save time throughout the week

## Questions? Contact Us!

- Email
- Phone
- Website

