



# Take Care of YOU

A Health and Wellness Bulletin | May 2024



## Mastering Meal Prep

In our busy lives, time is a precious commodity. Shopping for groceries, finding recipes, and cooking healthy meals can take up a lot of that time, leaving us feeling stressed and tempted to turn to more convenient, but less healthy options, like fast food and processed meals. Meal planning is one tool that will help you have more control over your schedule and your health. When you dedicate a block of time each week to plan and prepare meals, you decrease the pressure of last-minute decisions and reduce the temptation of reaching for unhealthy options.

Regularly eating out and snacking on junk food can take a toll on both your wallet and your health. Planning your meals in advance allows you to budget effectively by buying ingredients in bulk, minimizing food waste, and avoiding impulse purchases. You're also more likely to make mindful decisions about portion sizes, food quality, and nutritional balance. This mindful approach helps you create a healthier relationship with food, which leads to more satisfaction and enjoyment in everything you eat.

Meal planning doesn't just benefit your time, money, and health—it can also strengthen bonds with your family and friends. Involving loved ones in the planning and preparation process creates opportunities for meaningful interactions in the kitchen and around the dinner table. Sharing homemade meals becomes a source of joy and connection, enriching your relationships and creating happy memories.

Whether you're aiming to improve your current health, manage your time, save money, or deepen your connection with yourself and others, meal planning can be a powerful way to align your personal goals with your dietary goals. It's more than just a strategy for managing your time and food intake—it's a deliberate act of self-care. So create a shopping list, prep your kitchen, and start empowering yourself to make time-effective, health-conscious meals.

### Practical tips to help you get started with meal planning

- Set aside dedicated planning time once or twice a week.
- Create a master list of favorite recipes, including a list of ingredients and instructions.
- Start small and simple by planning just a few days' meals at a time to gradually build your meal prep skills.
- Invest in quality storage containers and freezer bags to properly store prepped meals.
- Choose foods that can be paired with multiple different meals (e.g. shredded chicken can be used in soups, wraps, salads, tostadas, etc.).
- Use a meal prep app—such as Anylist, Mealime, or Yummly—to help keep your plan organized.