



Cooking for the week ahead – Keep healthy food at hand

Following a well-balanced meal plan does not have to be time consuming or hard. Planning can help! On a day when you have some free time, cook a few healthy foods in bulk so that you have leftovers all week. Here are a few healthy dishes you can make ahead of time:

- **Make a whole bag of brown rice.**
- **Buy a bag of sweet potatoes.** Poke holes in each of the potatoes and bake in the oven at 350 degrees for 40-50 minutes.
- **Roast a whole chicken.** Season the chicken with your favorite spices. Place the chicken in the oven and cook at 375 degrees for 20 minutes per pound.
- **Roast a large batch of mixed vegetables.** Choose your vegetables (squash, zucchini, bell peppers, mushrooms, onions, or any other veggies you like) and chop them into pieces that are roughly the same size. Toss with olive oil and your favorite spices (salt, pepper, garlic). Cook on medium heat until vegetables are soft and start to brown.



Tips for a healthy diet

When trying to improve your health, be intentional about the foods you eat. These tips can help you make smarter food choices.

- **Eat whole, unprocessed foods.** When possible, eat foods made of one ingredient. Vegetables, fruits, lean meat (such as a chicken breast), eggs, nuts, and seeds are all good whole-food choices.
- **Avoid excess sugar.** Avoid foods that have added sugar or sugar listed as the first ingredient.
- **Lower salt intake.** Reduce your daily sodium (salt) intake to no more than 2,400 mg. Try to not add salt to your food and avoid canned and processed foods as much as possible.
- **Increase potassium.** Eat more potassium-rich foods. Beans, dark leafy greens, unprocessed potatoes, sweet potatoes, bananas, and citrus fruits are all good sources of potassium.
- **Eat fiber.** Fiber helps you feel full, improves digestion, and helps with weight management. Choose fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains instead of refined, processed food.





Stress management strategies

Instead of grabbing a bag of chips when you feel stressed, try these simple stress management techniques.

- **Breathe slowly.** Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 5 seconds, and then exhale for 6 seconds. Slowing your breathing helps send a signal to the brain to shift into a calmer state.
- **Take a break.** Get your mind off the stressor by distracting yourself with something you enjoy. Try doing a crossword puzzle, listening to your favorite song, or chatting with a friend.
- **Meditate.** Studies show that daily meditation (even if only for a few minutes each day) can rewire the brain and decrease stress and anxiety over time.

Balance your workouts

Regular physical exercise is beneficial for optimal health. A balanced workout allows you to improve your overall health while decreasing risk for injury and discomfort. Even moderate activity is beneficial. Try to include the following in your routine.

- **Cardio training.** This includes swimming, walking, running, hiking, or cycling. These activities condition the heart and lungs, decrease total cholesterol, and increase the “good” (HDL) cholesterol.
- **Strength training.** This includes weights, resistance bands, or using your body to increase and maintain strength (sit-ups and push-ups).
- **Interval training.** Jogging or sprinting for 30 seconds and then walking for 30 seconds, repeated several times. Interval training can be good for people who have limited time to work out but still want to get their heart rate up.



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