

Healthy Eating



A balanced diet is important for general wellbeing. In the short-term, it can help us to feel good, look our best and stay at a healthy weight. In the long-term, a healthy, balanced diet can reduce our risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. But what exactly is a healthy, balanced diet?

To eat a balanced diet you need to combine several different types of foods - from each of the main food groups - in the right amounts so your body gets all the nutrients it needs while maintaining a healthy weight.

Meal Preparation

We all have busy lives and it can be difficult to come home after a long day and prepare a healthy meal from scratch. Having a few things prepared in advance means you can still enjoy a delicious healthy meal with little effort. Here are my tips to make cooking healthy meals less time consuming:

1. Invest in containers

If you are going to prepare food in advance you need to buy containers to store this food to keep it fresh in the fridge. I recommend taking a look at your fridge first and see how much space you have. Choose containers that are freezer and microwave safe. If you are tight on space zip-lock bags are useful for storage too. If you don't have containers use plates and bowls and cover them with cling-film before putting in the fridge.

Remember if you have leftovers, these must be refrigerated within two hours of cooking. These will keep for three days in the fridge. If you are freezing your leftovers make sure the food is cold before you put it in the freezer and defrost in the fridge. Once defrosted, the food must be cooked or eaten within 24 hours.



2. Preparation

Wash, peel and chop your vegetables and store in an airtight container in the fridge. By keeping the vegetables in the fridge you minimize nutrient losses. You can also chop meat and keep in a sealed container in the fridge (within its use-by dates). Spending a few minutes doing this the night before makes cooking the next day less stressful.

For healthy snacks, wash and portion fruit into containers. These can be grabbed to snack on throughout the day.

3. Batch cook

Prepare double quantities of meals and freeze half. These are perfect for those times when you know you will be busy, just remove them from the freezer the day before and allow to defrost in the fridge. Soups, curries and casseroles are all perfect for freezing. You can also defrost food in the microwave as long as you are going to eat it straight away.

4. Meat

Cook a piece of meat at the weekend, portion it up for use during the following 3 days and pop in the fridge. I find this works well with a whole chicken, chicken breasts and ham. It can be used in sandwiches, pies, salads, or reheated for dinners. You can also marinade your meat before cooking and store it in an airtight sealed container in the fridge, ready to cook the next day.

5. Declutter your fridge and freezer



Toss old food. Go through your fridge and freezer and clear out your food clutter. The foods we have in our kitchens should be fresh and replenished frequently. There is a point where food is no longer good for you or appealing to eat. Half your freezer has freezer-burn. There are two ice cream pints with a spoonful left in each. Eat it or bin it. That bag of Parmesan rinds? If you're saving it for soup, make one now. Or throw them away. Reconsider the jar of preserved lemons you got as a wedding favor five years ago. It's brown, you have no idea how to use it, and it takes up energetic space in your kitchen. Toss it. If it has expired, has not been used in the last 6-12 months, or has duplicates (consolidate if possible), it's time to de-clutter. Be disciplined and instead of adding new foods to your fridge and freezer, don't shop for a few days and use up what you have. If after a few days you don't use the food well you probably are not going to.

