

## Quick and Easy Meals

You can make your own and save money too.

**All it takes is a bit of planning.**

You probably have several reasons for skipping meals. The most common one is not having time to shop for and prepare food.

But grabbing fast foods or hitting vending machines is expensive. And these generally aren't the healthiest food choices either.



"I always eat breakfast, even when I'm in a hurry."

1

## Breakfast

What are some quick, inexpensive breakfast ideas?

Breakfast really is an important start to your day.

**Here are some ideas:**

- ▶ **Make it portable.**
- ▶ **Stock up on convenient food items** you can grab and eat in the car, on public transportation, or just before work or class.
- ▶ On days you have a little time in the morning, you can **make oatmeal or pancakes** for less than 25 cents a serving.
- ▶ For a few cents more, you can prepare some brands of **instant oatmeal** in just 90 seconds.

**Fast breakfast foods:**

- ▶ **low-fat or nonfat yogurt** (For less sugar, select one sweetened with fruit, fruit juice or artificial sweetener.)
- ▶ **string cheese** or other low-fat cheeses
- ▶ **fresh fruits** (Buy in season when fruit tastes the best and costs the least.)
- ▶ **dried fruits**, such as raisins, apricots or prunes
- ▶ low-fat or no-fat-added **granola or other crunchy cereal** (Carry in a plastic bag or covered cup and mix with yogurt.)
- ▶ **bagels**
- ▶ whole-grain **muffins**
- ▶ **"energy" bars** (Check the label to make sure the bar provides enough food value and is low in fat and added sugar, such as sucrose, dextrose or corn syrup.)
- ▶ **leftovers:** pizza, particularly if it's vegetarian; that last bit of tuna casserole; or some stir fry and rice from last night's dinner

2

## Lunch

Isn't it easier to buy lunch?

It may be less of a hassle to buy lunch, but food in a restaurant, cafeteria or vending machine will definitely cost more. One way to save money is to carry your lunch.

**Here are some ways to make it work:**

- ▶ **Prepare your lunch the night before** to save time in the morning. Any leftovers from supper can be packed up for lunch the next day.
- ▶ **Invest in a good vacuum bottle** for carrying hot drinks and soups. Hot dishes or salads can be carried in a small, wide-mouth thermos. You'll save money in the long run.
- ▶ **Bring part of your meal.** For example, many cafeterias have hearty soups and bread for a reasonable price, but bring your own fruit, beverage and dessert to save what the cafeteria charges for those items.

## What should I eat?

Make these food choices for a healthy 2,000-calorie diet.

**6 ounces of grains every day (half whole grains).**

**1-ounce serving equals:**

- 1 slice bread
- ½ bagel, English muffin, Kaiser roll, bun
- 1 6-inch corn or flour tortilla
- 1 cup dry, ready-to-eat cereal
- ½ cup of cooked cereal, pasta or rice

**2½ cups of vegetables every day.**

**1-cup serving equals:**

- 2 cups of leafy greens (lettuce, raw spinach, kale)
- 1 cup all others

**2 cups of fruit a day.**

**1-cup serving equals:**

- 1 medium whole fruit (apple, orange, pear)
- 1 cup of diced fruit (pineapple, melon, peaches)
- 8 oz. of 100% juice

3

## Dinner

The last thing I want to do in the evening is think about making dinner.

**What can I do in 20 minutes?**

Pizza may be convenient, but it gets expensive when you eat it too often. And prepackaged convenience foods are generally high in sodium and fat. They're also more expensive (and less tasty) than if you made the dish yourself.

**Here's a basic plan:**

- ▶ **Start with a starch serving**—instant rice or pasta, a tortilla, a potato or pizza crust.
- ▶ **Add any combination of vegetables;** low-fat cheese; a serving of meat, fish, poultry or beans; and/or a simple sauce.
- ▶ **Bake, broil, steam or stir-fry** the combination you've chosen to keep it on the healthy side.
- ▶ **Round out the meal** with whole-grain bread, fruit or salad and low-fat milk.

4

See [www.MyPlate.gov](http://www.MyPlate.gov) to make your own personalized eating plan.

## Saving Money When You Shop

### Before You Shop

- ▶ **Make a shopping list** of the meals you've planned for the week.
- ▶ **Check grocery ads** for sales and/or clip coupons (for the foods you really need).
- ▶ **Eat before you shop.** Then you'll be less likely to buy on impulse.

### Plan Ahead

Take some time on the weekends to plan menus. Shop and prepare larger portions of meals when you have time.

#### Ideas:

- **Make up a batch of pancakes.** Put plastic wrap or wax paper between every 2 cakes and freeze in plastic bags. (An English muffin bag works well.)  
When you want pancakes, take out as many as you want and microwave them. You can do the same with waffles.
- **Wash and cut up raw vegetables.** Pat or spin dry, wrap in a plain paper towel and refrigerate in plastic bags or containers. They'll keep for several days.  
Use broccoli, carrots, onions, mushrooms, celery and cauliflower. These can quickly and easily be turned into soups, casseroles, stir-fry or salads by adding a few other ingredients.
- **Make up a batch of spaghetti sauce.** Freeze in 1- or 2-person servings. Serve over pasta, baked potatoes, rice or spaghetti squash.

5

### At the Store

- ▶ **Stick to your list.**
- ▶ **Compare brands** by calculating the price per ounce. (Many stores provide unit pricing which gives a cost per serving and allows price comparisons at a glance.)
- ▶ **Choose store brands.** They usually cost less than name brands.
- ▶ **Buy in bulk** when you can—rice, granola, dried fruits, etc.

### What to Choose

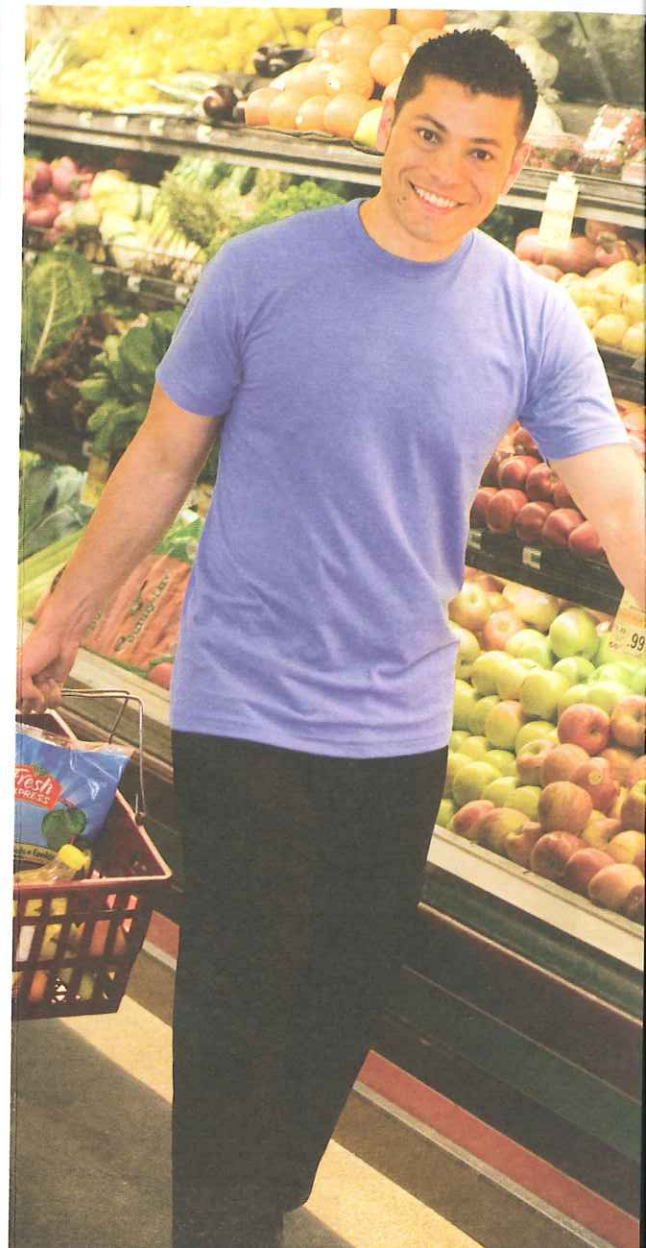
- ▶ **Select lean cuts of beef.** They're lower in fat, higher in protein and less costly overall.
- ▶ **Poultry is usually less expensive** than red meat. It also contains fewer calories and less fat.
- ▶ **Buy a whole chicken** and cut it up. Trade a little time for a lot of money.
- ▶ **Fruit juices are a better value** than fruit drinks. Fruit drinks are mainly water with sugar, flavorings and vitamins added.
- ▶ **Buy whole fruits or vegetables** rather than juice. You'll get more nutrients and fiber, and you'll save money.
- ▶ **Frozen yogurt and ice milk** contain less fat and cost less than ice cream.
- ▶ **Buy day-old bread** and other baked goods. Freeze them for later.
- ▶ **The color of egg shells** makes no difference in food value. Buy whichever is least expensive.

6

### Extra Savings!

- **Use dried beans** in place of meats, or cut meat in half by adding beans to the recipe.
- **Prepare and freeze casseroles** and sauces in advance.
- **Use leftover vegetables** and cooking liquids in soups and sauces.
- **Try instant non-fat milk** as an inexpensive way to add milk to recipes.
- **Keep fats and oils** in the refrigerator to prevent spoiling.
- **Reuse plastic bags,** containers and foil.

# Eating Well with No Time & No Money



This brochure is not intended as a substitute for your health professional's opinion or care.

Series Editor: Barbara A. Cooley, MA, CHES.

Text: Dawn Graff-Haight, PhD.

Reviewed 2011. Revised 2007. © 1996 ETR Associates. All rights reserved. It is a violation of U.S. copyright law to reproduce any portion of this publication.

**ETR**  
Associates

1-800-321-4407  
www.etr.org/pub

A nonprofit organization

Title No. H240