

Employee Tip Sheet

Healthy Meals... Fast

Fit & Fun Families

Too Busy to Cook?

We all feel that our lives are busy. Sometimes meal planning becomes our lowest priority and falls to the bottom of our "To Do List." With small, simple easy steps, planning meals can be fun and easy at work and at home.

Why?

When we are in a hurry and feel pressed for time we tend to make unhealthy food choices. Restaurant options are not always as nutritious or low in calories as meals prepared at home.

How?

- Create small goals to eat healthy on-the-go meals. Fruits and veggies are the ORIGINAL fast food!
- Use the action ideas for work and home to make small changes.
- Track your progress and goals.
- Celebrate your healthy changes and share your good ideas with others.

Resources:

- www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/5ADay/recipes/index.htm This site gives recipe ideas that promote fruit and vegetables and are low in fat and cholesterol. The use of whole grains and minimal use of salt and sugar are strongly encouraged in all 5-A-Day recipes.
- www.smallstep.gov This site gives recommendations to start making small, easy healthy lifestyle changes.
- hin.nhlbi.nih.gov/menuplanner/ This site gives you the ability to plan daily healthy meals. The interactive menu planner is designed to guide daily food and meal choices based on one day's calorie allowance. It may be used in advance to plan a meal, or at the end of a day to add up total calories, as well as fat, and carbohydrates consumed.
- **Cooking Light Magazine** or Cooking Light online, www.cookinglight.com Search for family menu ideas and recipes under the category of "Find Recipes."
- **Meals in Minutes**, The American Heart Association, Random House Inc., NY, 2000. Quick, healthy menu ideas and recipes.

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Take Action: *Put Health in Motion!*

What you can do at home:

Set healthy goals and plan ahead.

- Involve the whole family in meal planning whenever possible.
- Assign a night of the week for each family member.
- Make a grocery list and shop for the meals you've planned.
- When you do cook, make enough for two meals and freeze one for a busy day.
- Chop and freeze leftover chicken or other meats to use in rice or pasta dishes or for a quick main course salad.
- Wrap and freeze individual-sized servings of thinly sliced meats for a quick sandwich.
- Keep your kitchen stocked with items like quick cooking rice, pasta, tortillas, canned beans, low-fat cheese, canned or frozen vegetables, tomato sauce, canned fruits, and low-fat milk.

What you can do at work:

Goal: Plan ahead for quick meals at work.

To create your workplace meal plan:

- Plan for meals ahead of time. For example, on Sunday look at your calendar for the week ahead and plan which days you can bring your lunch and which days you can eat in a restaurant or cafeteria.
- Pack brown bag meals and bring to work.
- Use leftovers from home for meals at work.
- Have healthy portable meals available. To save time grab portable food such as yogurt, fruit, salads or sandwiches.
- Keep a list of healthy ideas handy.
- Set a time and place for your meals away from your desk.
- Sit down for a meal instead of grazing.

The Healthy Meals...Fast Action

Action #1: **Plan Ahead**

Challenge yourself to set a goal to plan meals for one week. When you see how easy and beneficial it can become add another week to your goal. After the next week, add another week. Soon healthy meal planning will become a habit!

Use the **Healthy Meals... Fast Meal Planner Worksheet** to help you plan.

Action #2: **The Eating out Challenge**

Eating out? Challenge yourself to set healthy goals for eating fast foods both during and after work:

- Eat fast foods one to two times per week as a "break", not as a daily "norm".
- Get "normal" sized portions and save money by sharing super-sized items like soft drinks and fries.
- Choose low-fat milk or water and fruits when available.

This message brought to you by *CIGNA HealthCare* and the *Healthy Kids Challenge*.
Working to make healthy eating and physical activity a regular part of your life at home and at work.

Employee Worksheet Healthy Meals... Fast

*Fit & Fun
Families*

Weekly Meal Planner

MY WEEKLY MEAL PLANNER

MEAL IDEAS FAST

MY WEEKLY SHOPPING LIST

SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THUR

FRI

SAT

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