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HEALTHY EATING

Meal Planning

Please note that if you have any special conditions like diabetes, HIV or AIDS, heart disease, or if you are pregnant, first read the additional information under the relevant section before starting your meal planning. For many people eating five times a day at first seems like a daunting task, but don't be put off, this can be a step-by-step process building up to the ideal.

Start with the meals that you are currently eating, and try to get the combination of foods in those meals correct – a carbohydrate, a protein, as many veggies as possible and a serving of good fats (a total of three servings per day for women and five for men). Also, eat the correct portion size – a fist of carbohydrates, palm size of protein and two fingers of fats.

Then build up to eating five times a day. In the beginning you may need to set the alarm on your phone to remind you to eat. When eating the correct combinations and portions of food at regular three hour intervals, you will find that your metabolism is enhanced, and your energy



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levels will be increased and will last for the entire day. As your body learns to trust the new routine you will find that you become hungry every three hours and you do not need to remember to eat. Your body will be receiving just what it needs for optimum performance.

There is a saying that says:
'Failure to plan is a plan for failure'
– it's true!



Planning your meals and shopping list are really important. Currently you probably shop from a place of unconscious habits – you know the things that you like to eat, so it's easy to go shopping without a list. Now you are learning new habits and a list will be necessary in the beginning, before this eating style becomes an unconscious habit.

Start by printing out the meal planner and the food lists. You need to make the food preparation process as simple and as easy as possible. A way to cut down on the amount of food preparation is to, when preparing your supper, cook more than you need to and use the extra for meals for the next day.

For example, with a supper of chicken breast (protein), butternut (carbohydrate), green beans and broccoli, the next day you could have a mid-morning meal of chopped chicken breast and olives on Provita. Lunch could be a salad of shredded chicken, cold butternut, lettuce, green beans, broccoli, peppers, cucumber and an olive oil salad dressing.

So, each night you prepare both supper and most of the next day's food. You will need a collection of containers and a small cool bag to carry your food to work. Also keep serviettes and cutlery at your desk.

Look at the example meal planners to give you some ideas, then complete your own meal planner for the week and from that create your shopping list.



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Tips and shortcuts

Things like rice and beans last well in the freezer and for a few days in the fridge. So, you could cook a pot of brown rice or butter beans and keep some in the fridge for a meal or two and freeze the rest in portion sizes, ready to be tossed into a salad for lunch. Similarly with brown rice, add chopped onions, cooked green beans, red peppers, olives, tuna and salad dressing and lunch is ready!

If you are cooking a stew, fish pie, lasagne (healthy low-fat version) cook more than you need for the meal and freeze the rest in portion sizes. In this way you will always have healthy choices at hand and reduce food preparation time.

It may happen that you are unable to prepare your food for that day, don't let this catch you out. In your desk you should keep a few cans of fish (a can opener), beans and corn (not sweet corn), a packet of Provitas and a small bottle of olive oil.

In our busy lives we have become accustomed to not thinking about what we eat and just grabbing whatever is on offer in the canteen or the passing snack trolley. So our health is determined, unconsciously, by the food that is at hand. Don't let this unconscious behaviour be your downfall. Always ensure that you have good healthy food at hand, so you can make healthy choices.



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