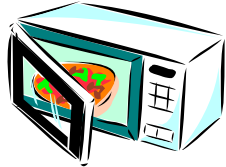


Quick Meals For Busy Families

You have the most control over the food your family eats when you prepare it at home. However, many of us eat a lot of fast food or pre-packaged meals because we feel pressed for time, but cooking healthy meals at home is faster than you think!

Don't be afraid to cook with the microwave. Most people just use their microwave to reheat leftovers, but it can save a lot of cooking time too. Old-fashioned oatmeal can be as convenient as instant oatmeal when you use the microwave. It can also cook fresh or frozen vegetables in a flash.



Feel free to freeze. Many foods freeze well after they have been cooked. When you make a main dish for your family, cook an extra portion and freeze it for a future meal later in the week. You can also find a day when you have the time to cook 2 or 3 main dishes that you can freeze for later meals or individual portions for you to take to work for lunch.

Set the stage. When you are cleaning up after dinner, set out breakfast items for the next morning. If your children bring their lunch to school, this is a good time to have them help make their own lunch for the following day.

Toss it in. It's easy to make a healthier meal by adding vegetables, fruit, whole grains, or beans to a dish.

- **Fruit-** toss berries, banana slices, or apple chunks into breakfast cereal or yogurt. Sliced fruit also makes a great topping for toast, English muffins, and bagels.
- **Vegetables-** toss fresh or frozen vegetables into pasta dishes, soups, stir fries, or casseroles.
- **Whole grains-** toss cooked barley or brown rice into soups.
- **Beans-** toss garbanzo or red kidney beans onto your salads.

Preparation is key. If buying pre-cut fruits and vegetables is too expensive, pick a time of the day when you can do a little measuring, chopping, and slicing.

- **Tear** up a few heads of lettuce for daily salads. Keep them in plastic storage containers box with a few sheets of paper towel to absorb moisture
- **Measure** out servings of trail mix for a quick snack or oatmeal for a fast breakfast.

- **Chop** some carrots or celery into sticks for the children to snack on for the next few days.
- **Slice** hunks of cheese to eat as snacks or to use in cooking.



Grab and Go.

Snacks- if you've got all your vegetables chopped and snack foods measured into servings then you can just grab what you need and keep moving.

Lunch/Dinner- grab the leftovers from dinner, and pack them for lunch. You can reinvent last night's chicken and rice as a burrito or make a quick salad wrap by tossing two handfuls of lettuce and your choice of vegetables, beans, or meat (chicken, turkey, or fish) into the middle of a whole wheat pita. Add a light dressing, wrap it up, and go!

Created by the Children in Balance initiative at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University

Supermarket Smarts

- Shop along the walls of the supermarket first.
- Before you go down an aisle, know what you're looking for and head straight for it!
- Stick to your list: avoid impulse buys at the cashier.
- Choose your treats before you get to the store.
- If fresh fruits and vegetables are too expensive, frozen options are just as healthy and are more affordable.
- Choose "select" round or loin cuts of meat.
- Avoid prepared foods and frozen or boxed dinners.
- Check your cart before you go to the cashier, did you stick to your list? Don't be afraid to take foods out of your cart.

