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How to Plan a Good Meal

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Do you realize that everything you EAT turns into YOU? Well, this is what happens. You really can't blame your body for being rather choicky about what you feed it! A little more consideration for your body's needs and likes when you eat food might give you a happier, healthier body.

Think about this, too . . . if you plan and cook meals for other people, you influence the kind of bodies they have. Take a close look at your family. You will see results of your meal planning ability. Do you see signs of a good nutritional background?

Alert, happy facial expression; straight strong body framework; moderate fat padding over bones and muscles (no excess); healthy skin color; bright, clear eyes; well-formed teeth and gums; glossy hair.

What you place on the table is usually eaten by your family and has a lot to do with their physical well-being and happiness. You want the best for them. Would you like to become a better meal planner? Here is some help.

**ADVANTAGES OF PLANNING AHEAD**

What makes a meal taste and look delicious yet be low in cost and easy to prepare? You'll find the secret is PLANNING AHEAD! Well-planned meals win family's compliments, save time and money, and provide nutrients for good health at the same time.

Plans do not always have to be written on paper. However, a file of good recipes, successful menus you have used and grocery shopping lists are written plans which are valuable time and money savers. You may prefer just "thinking" your plans instead of writing them. The important thing is to keep a variety of foods on hand from which to choose well-balanced and attractive meals. Your freezer, kitchen cabinet shelves, refrigerator and garden can be miniature supermarkets at planning time.

Other planning advantages are:

**MORE NUTRITIOUS AND INTERESTING MEALS**

- Apply nutrition knowledge—shop for nutrient-rich foods important to family health
- Visualize appearance of food in meals
- Teach family members better food habits.

Serve wide variety of foods, new ones often

**CONSIDER THESE POINTS WHEN YOU PLAN MEALS**

**CONTRAST** in colors, textures, flavors, temperatures, shapes, sizes and preparation methods all add appetite appeal. Your sense of taste, smell, sight, feeling and even hearing are involved in fullest enjoyment of food. Plan food combinations carefully to satisfy each sense. Colorful, crunchy, tasty foods with rich aroma are "mouth-watering"! Soft, bland, pale foods have less appeal. Best meals blend both kinds.

**NUTRITIONAL NEEDS** must be considered. Plan to include foods from each of the Basic Four Food Groups in every meal. This is necessary for life and health of family members.

**FOOD COSTS** vary. Plan to buy and use low-cost foods if your budget calls for this. Low-cost foods can be just as nutritious, good tasting and attractive as high-cost foods.

Your **COOKING ABILITY** should be considered when you plan meals. Choose recipes which fit your abilities...you need not be an accomplished gourmet cook to serve well-prepared, delicious meals. The recipe or menu you pick makes the difference. A simple dish or meal correctly prepared can be as nutritious, look and taste as good as a more complicated one.

How much **AVAILABLE TIME** do you have to prepare the meal? You may wish to use some convenience foods (ready-prepared). Of, if you are hurried, plan quick-cooking meals. Use simple recipes which take little time to prepare.

**FOODS WE MUST EAT DAILY FOR GOOD HEALTH**

**FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

*Everyone*: 4 or more servings . . . 1 serving should be a citrus fruit or tomatoes, 1 a green or yellow vegetable, 2 other fruits and vegetables

**BREADS AND CEREALS**

*Everyone*: 4 or more servings of whole grain, enriched or restored products
Milk and Other Dairy Foods

Child: 3 to 4 cups
Teen: 4 or more cups
Adult: 2 or more cups
Mother-to-be: 4 or more cups
Nursing Mother: 6 or more cups

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Nuts

Everyone: 2 or more servings

PATTERNS FOR PLANNING

You may use these patterns to plan meals. Size of meals may be varied to suit family wishes if nutrients and appetite appeal are included.

Breakfast... Fruit (citrus), Protein Dish or Cereal with Milk, Bread, Milk or Other Beverage.

Lunch... Main Dish (protein-rich), 1 Vegetable, Salad or Simple Dessert, Bread, Milk.

Dinner... Main Dish, 2 Vegetables (1 green or yellow), Salad (optional), Bread, Milk or Other Beverage, Simple Dessert.

HANDY MEAL PLANNING HINTS

- Choose your main dish first, then plan rest of meal around it. Pick flavors which enhance each other. Avoid repeating same flavors in a meal.

- Replace 1 vegetable with a vegetable salad sometimes; a fruit salad may replace a dessert.

- Limit number of mixed dishes in a meal... one per meal is a good rule. Avoid combinations as stew, mixed casserole and mixed salad in same meal.

- Select dessert in relation to meal... a light one with a rich meal, rich one with lighter meal.

- Choose foods for meals which efficiently use equipment... as oven meals, skillet meals... where most of food is cooked at one time.

- Organize helpful meal suggestions or pictures from magazines or food packages into a notebook.

- Hang an attractively framed Basic 4 Food Groups picture on kitchen wall as a quick meal reference.

CHECK YOUR MENU

Every meal you eat or cook should have a check by each point on this score. After you check with a pencil a few times, you will remember the points and can check mentally as you plan meals.

A. Does the meal contain foods rich in nutrients?

(Should include foods rich in vitamins A and C and at least one food from each food group)

- Milk and Other Dairy Foods
- Meats, Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Nuts
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Wholegrain and Enriched Breads and Cereals

B. Does the meal have variety for appetite-appeal?

- Colors... green, red, yellow, brown, white
- Flavors... sweet, sour, bland, spicy
- Textures... crisp, soft, liquid, chewy
- Temperatures... hot, cold, warm, cool
- Shapes, Sizes... small, big, round, square
- Preparation Method... boil, fry, roast, raw