



3 Steps to Quick Healthy Meals

Fast foods, frozen pizza, carry-out meals—all are popular *quick* meals; some even have *healthy* options. But when you're ready for more . . . here's a 3-step plan to guide you. Healthy foods can be part of any schedule and cooking style. Planning is the key to creating menu options that fit your lifestyle.

What do you do when it's "time to eat"?

- Stop at a restaurant on your way to wherever you need to be next.
- Pick up food at the grocery store or deli on your way home.
- Pull an "emergency" meal from your freezer and reheat it.
- Serve a meal from your slow cooker.
- Whip up something from your well-stocked pantry.
- Any of the above, depending on how much planning you've done.

Every choice has a cost in hours and minutes and in dollars and cents. Every choice impacts your health. Planning ahead increases your choices.

1. Stock up on the basics

Smart shopping puts the ingredients you need where you need them—in your cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer. Think about the foods you like to serve (or want to serve). Use the following list as a guide to create your own master shopping list.

In the cupboard:

- Spaghetti, macaroni, other pasta
- Packaged biscuit baking mix
- Ready-to-heat sauces and reduced fat, reduced sodium soups
- Rice, barley, lentils, split peas
- Potatoes, onions
- Canned fruits, vegetables, beans, tuna
- Canned and bottled fruit and vegetable juices
- Salsa, seasoning and sauce mixes, and other condiments
- Cooking oil, non-stick spray

In the refrigerator and/or freezer:

- Fresh and frozen vegetables, baby carrots, pre-torn salad greens
- Fresh and frozen fruit and fruit juices
- Frozen chopped onion and green pepper
- Tortillas, pita bread, pizza crust, bagels, ready-to-bake rolls, whole grain bread, English muffins
- Cheese (grated, sliced), yogurt, cottage cheese, milk, eggs, margarine
- Cooked sliced meat or poultry, fish, ground meats**
- Skinless, boneless chicken and/or turkey breasts
- Cooked pasta, rice, bulgur, barley

2. Plan "pyramid" menus

The easiest way to serve a healthy meal is to use the proportions suggested by the Food Guide Pyramid. Start at the base and work your way up:

- Choose two or more grain products.
- Add one or more vegetables and fruits.
- Add a dairy product.
- Add a meat or protein source.
- If desired, add small amounts of fats, oils, or sweeteners (such as margarine, butter, salad dressing, vegetable dip, sugar) to enhance flavor.

3. Eat and enjoy!

Use these sample menus to start your own planning session:

Breakfast Menu

Orange or Pineapple Juice

Fruit Parfait**

Whole Wheat Bread, Toasted

Milk or Hot Chocolate

Lunch Menu

Pizza on a Potato**

Garlic Bread or Corn Muffins

Apple Slices

Milk

Lunch To-Go Menu

Garden Tortilla Wrap**

Grapes

Oatmeal Cookie

Milk

Dinner Menu

Chicken and Rice**

Lettuce or Spinach Salad

Whole Wheat Bread

Milk

Ice Cream with Strawberries

** Recipes on next page

Fruit Parfait

Makes 4 servings, 1 cup each

2 cups low-fat vanilla yogurt
2 cups cut-up fresh fruit (such as banana, grapes, blueberries) or unsweetened canned fruit, drained (such as peaches)

1. Wash fresh fruit and cut up OR drain canned fruit.
2. Put 1/4 cup of the fruit into the bottom of 4 glasses. Top each with 1/4 cup of the vanilla yogurt. To each cup add another 1/4 cup of the fruit and top with 1/4 cup of yogurt.
3. Serve. (Or cover and chill in the refrigerator until ready to serve.)

Per serving: 116 calories, 23 grams carbohydrate, 5 grams protein, 1 gram fat, 1.5 grams fiber

IDEA: Can be prepared the night before for a quick breakfast.

Good source of calcium.

Recipe reprinted with permission from "What's to Eat? Nutrition Calendar 2003"—Iowa State University Extension.

Pizza on a Potato

Makes 1 serving

1 potato, scrubbed clean
2 tablespoons pizza or tomato sauce
1/4 to 1/2 cup frozen vegetable mix
1/4 cup shredded cheese (mozzarella or Monterey jack)

1. Bake or microwave potato until it is soft and cooked through.
2. While potato is baking, place frozen vegetables in a colander; run warm water over them until thawed; drain well.
3. Split baked potato in half lengthwise and place in a small baking dish.
4. Spread pizza or tomato sauce on each half of the cooked potato. Top with drained, vegetables.
5. Sprinkle shredded cheese over vegetables.
6. Microwave until cheese is bubbly. (Or bake at 375°F for 5 to 10 minutes until cheese is melted.)

Per serving: 320 calories, 57 grams carbohydrate, 10 grams protein, 7 grams fat, 5 grams fiber

Garden Tortilla Wrap

Makes 1 serving

1. Cover one 10-inch flour tortilla (may use whole wheat) with rinsed spinach (shredded, torn, or whole leaves).
2. Add choice of chopped, raw vegetables—such as shredded carrot, sliced or chopped tomato, or pepper strips.
3. If desired, add 2 tablespoons shredded cheese and 1 thin slice deli turkey.
4. Roll up. Wrap in plastic wrap.

Per serving: 145 calories, 27 grams carbohydrate, 4.5 grams protein, 2.5 grams fat, 3.5 grams fiber

REMINDER: Place Garden Tortilla Wrap and other lunch items in a cooler with an ice pack to keep chilled and safe to eat.

Chicken and Rice

Makes 4 servings

1 teaspoon vegetable cooking oil
4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
1 (10.75-ounce) can cream of chicken soup
1 1/2 cups water
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon paprika
2 cups quick-cooking rice
2 cups fresh or frozen broccoli or vegetable mix

1. Heat oil in non-stick skillet over medium high heat.
2. Add chicken; brown lightly on each side. Cover and cook 4 minutes on each side or until cooked through. Remove chicken to a bowl or plate.
3. Add soup, water, pepper, and paprika to skillet. Heat to boiling.
4. Stir in rice and broccoli or vegetables. Top with chicken. Sprinkle additional paprika and pepper over chicken. Cover and cook over low heat 5 minutes.

Per serving: 406 calories, 45 grams carbohydrate, 30 grams protein, 14 grams fat, 4.5 grams fiber

Ready-to-use Ground Beef

1. In a large saucepan, cook and stir 2 or more pounds ground beef over medium heat until crumbly and no longer pink, about 6 to 8 minutes.
2. Pour off the drippings.
3. Place crumbled beef in a strainer or colander over a bowl.
4. Pour 1 quart hot tap water over the beef and let drain several minutes.
5. Divide into 2-cup (1-pound) quantities and package in heavy freezer bags for later use.

Visit these Web sites for more ideas:

ISU Extension Nutrition

www.extension.iastate.edu/nutrition

ISU Extension Publications

www.extension.iastate.edu/pubs

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