

# MENU PLANNING MADE EASY

Save time, reduce stress, and eat better all week

*Program Resource*

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You're busy — and the thought of planning meals may feel like just one more chore. But taking time to plan meals each week and writing out a grocery list means you ultimately save time and reduce stress.

## Why menu planning works

Saves time — you always know “what’s for dinner” and make fewer last-minute grocery runs

Saves money — eating out is far more expensive than cooking at home

Reduces food waste — you only buy what you need

Reduces stress — you have a solid plan for the week

Improves blood sugar control — you know exactly what’s in your food

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## Quality Control

Choosing your own ingredients gives you more control over quality. When we eat out, food often contains higher sodium, lower quality oils, GMO ingredients, and MSG. This doesn't mean you shouldn't enjoy eating out — but cooking at home means you know exactly what's in your meals, which is a huge help for blood sugar control.

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## Getting Organized

Pick a consistent day for meal planning — many people choose Saturday or Sunday.

Decide whether you'll plan and shop on the same day or different days. If you have a family, ask for input on what they'd like to eat during the week.

## Where to find recipe ideas

Cookbooks or existing recipe cards

Recipes online

Your own tried-and-true favourites

The recipe collection in your program resources

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## How to Start

Start with what you know so you don't feel overwhelmed. If you already have a collection of recipes, start there.

- Find 5 or 6 recipes you want to make for the week and go with that
- If you typically eat out most nights, start by planning just 3 dinners this week
- Consider which nights are hectic — plan the easiest meals for those nights
- Slow cooker meals and batch cooking are great for busy evenings
- Double a recipe to have leftovers ready for a second night
- Cook extra chicken for one dish and set half aside for a salad another night

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## The Weekly Process

1. Choose your meals for the week
2. Check your fridge and pantry for what you already have
3. Write your grocery list for what you still need
4. Post your menu plan somewhere visible (the fridge works well)
5. Label it — “Week 1 Meals,” “Week 2 Meals” etc. — so you can reuse it

*After a few weeks, you'll have quite a few menu plans to pick from and it gets easier. Add 1 new recipe every week or two to expand your options.*

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## Bonus Tips

### **Cook once, eat twice**

Plan to make double or triple what you'd normally make for dinner so you have leftovers for lunches or another dinner.

### **Cook grains ahead**

Cook rice and other grains for the whole week on the weekend. Refrigerate and reheat as needed (add a little water). Most grains keep 3–5 days in the fridge.

### **Defrost in advance**

Check what frozen meat, chicken, or fish you need for the next day, the night before.

### **Prep vegetables ahead**

Chop veggies on the weekend or the night before and store in containers in the fridge. Decide which nights you can use frozen vegetables instead of fresh.

### **Make sauces and marinades in advance**

Prepare any dressings, spice mixes or sauces ahead of time to save time on busier nights.

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## **Your Action Step This Week**

Look at your calendar and see which nights you'll be cooking. Decide which nights need a quick easy meal and which nights you have more time.

- ✓ **Write out the menu for each day's meals**
- ✓ **Make a grocery list, checking your pantry first**
- ✓ **Decide which day you'll go grocery shopping**

*Even if you start by planning just three meals this week, it will make a difference. Taking 30 minutes to plan will save you far more time and energy in the long run.*