

# HEALTHY WEIGHT

Facts for Families

## So, What's for Dinner?

**Are home cooked meals really healthier than eating out?** Nutrition experts say yes. The average home cooked meal has several benefits over commercially prepared or restaurant prepared foods, and with a little planning and attention to nutrition, home cooked meals can be substantially healthier than prepared foods.

- ▶ Home cooked meals usually have fewer calories, less saturated fat and salt, and more fiber than commercially prepared meals.
- ▶ Home cooked meals usually consist of reasonably sized portions and often include vegetables and fruits.
- ▶ Home cooked meals usually cost less than commercially prepared foods.
- ▶ Sitting down together, even briefly, fosters healthy eating habits and helps busy families stay involved in each other's lives.

**Home cooked meals usually have fewer calories, more reasonable portions, and cost less than typical meals eaten at restaurants.**

**Is there an easy system for planning healthy meals?** In a survey of consumers conducted by General Mills, half of the participants “planned” dinner just one hour before mealtime. Meal planning may sound like lots of work, but families who do it report that it turns out to be a great timesaver overall. Planning helps prevent last minute fusses, can help teach children about good food choices, and saves money over frequent meals eaten out or delivered.

Use the *Menu Map* inside this fact sheet to help plan family meals and streamline shopping. Make the most of planning by involving the entire family in choosing the week's menu. After shopping for the week's provisions, post the menu on the refrigerator. If they know what's planned for dinner, your spouse or older children might just start preparing dinner for you!



# So, What's for Dinner? *Menu Map*

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Breakfast</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Breakfast</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Breakfast</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Breakfast</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Breakfast</b> _____ _____ _____ _____
<b>Lunch</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Lunch</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Lunch</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Lunch</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Lunch</b> _____ _____ _____ _____
<b>Dinner</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Dinner</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Dinner</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Dinner</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Dinner</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
<b>Snacks</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Snacks</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Snacks</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Snacks</b> _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>Snacks</b> _____ _____ _____ _____
 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>



**Grains Group:**

Children ages 2-6: 6 servings  
 Children ages 7-19: 9 servings  
 Teen boys: 11 servings

**1 Serving =**

- 1 slice of bread
- About 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal
- 1/2 cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta



**Vegetable Group:**

Children ages 2-6: 3 servings  
 Children ages 7-19: 4 servings  
 Teen boys: 5 servings

**1 Serving =**

- 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables
- 1/2 cup of other vegetables, cooked or raw
- 3/4 cup of vegetable juice



**Fruit Group:**

Children ages 2-6: 2 servings  
 Children ages 7-19: 3 servings  
 Teen boys: 4 servings



**Letting children choose their snacks or help with the planning of their meals can teach them how to develop healthy eating habits.**

### Where can I get good ideas for healthy meals?

If you need some inspiration for meal planning but you don't like to browse cookbooks, try **MenuMailer**, a low-cost online service that emails subscribers a weekly set of quick meal plans with simple recipes. The service features menus for vegetarians, meat-eaters and low-carbohydrate dieters, and each meal comes with nutrition information and a shopping list of the provisions you will need. To order, visit [www.savingdinner.com](http://www.savingdinner.com).

The National Heart Lung and Blood Institute provides a number of free or low cost menu ideas on their Web site. To order, visit [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/index.htm#recipes](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/index.htm#recipes) or call 301-592-8573.

### What are some tips for making healthy food choices when my family eats out?

When you know how to order, eating out can be healthy, too. Many restaurants have made the job easier by adapting popular dishes and creating new selections that offer diners more nutritious alternatives. Still, be aware that so-called “healthy choices” can sometimes be anything but. The American Diabetes Association offers these helpful tips for making good food choices outside the home:

- ▶▶ If you don't know what's in a dish or don't know the serving size, ask.
- ▶▶ Try to eat the same portion as you would at home. If the serving size is larger, share with someone at your table, or put the extra food in a container to go.
- ▶▶ Ask for sauces, gravy and salad dressings “on the side.” Try dipping your fork tines in the salad dressing or sauce before spearing a bite of food. You'll use less this way.
- ▶▶ Order foods that are not breaded or fried because they add fat. If the food comes breaded, peel off the outer coating.
- ▶▶ Read the menu creatively. Order a fruit cup for an appetizer or the breakfast melon for dessert. Instead of a dinner entree, combine a salad with a low-fat appetizer.
- ▶▶ Ask for substitutions. Instead of French fries, request a double order of a vegetable. If you can't get a substitute, just ask that the high-fat food be left off your plate.
- ▶▶ Ask for low-calorie versions of food, such as salad dressings, even if they're not on the menu. Vinegar and a dash of oil or a squeeze of lemon are a better choice than high-fat dressings or sauces.



The Business Group's tool kit, *Reducing Child and Adolescent Obesity*, is made possible by support from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration, Health and Human Services. Read all of the fact sheets in this series to learn about the many ways overweight can be prevented and treated. The series is available at [www.businessgrouphealth.org/prevention/et\\_childobesity.cfm](http://www.businessgrouphealth.org/prevention/et_childobesity.cfm)