



Menu Planning Checklist

Planning ahead can help you get the most out of every meal! Use this checklist to give your meal planning a nutrition boost.

Most often, daily meals and snacks contain:

A variety of interesting flavours, colours, shapes (cubes, slices) textures (crunchy, smooth) and temperatures (cooked, raw).

Foods that are less processed/prepared. For example, rather than buying frozen pizza, make your own whole-wheat pita pizzas.

Fresh vegetables and fruits in season and frozen or canned (drained) at other times. Include a variety of colours to get all the great benefits vegetables and fruit have to offer.

Whole-grain choices most of the time: brown rice, barley, bulgur, oats, quinoa, couscous, pitas, cereals, pasta, tortillas, roti, wild rice, popcorn.

Lower-fat milk (2% milk fat or less) or unsweetened plant-based fortified beverage (like fortified soy beverage).

Plant-based proteins (like beans, tofu, nuts and seeds), eggs, fish, and lean meats with fat trimmed and poultry with skin removed.

Some sources of omega-3 like from fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines) or from plant-based sources like seaweed, ground flaxseed or walnuts at least a couple times a week.

Low amounts of fat, sugar and/or salt. Eat foods with little nutrition like sweet baked goods, chips, candy less frequently and in small amounts.



Daily beverage choices:

Drink water most of the time.

Adults can have up to six cups of tea or three cups of coffee a day (which is equal to about 300-400 mg caffeine). During pregnancy should limit caffeine intake to 300 mg per day, which is equal to about 2 cups of coffee or 4 cups of tea per day. 1 cup = 250 mL or 8 oz.

Avoid juice, which is a source of free sugars and can increase risk of dental decay.

Avoid sweetened fruit drinks, punches, energy drinks and soft drinks.

Cooking Methods:

Foods are flavoured with herbs, spices, onions, etc., and prepared with little or no added sugar or salt.

Unsaturated fats like canola, olive and soybean oils, salad dressing, soft margarine is used for cooking.

Butter, lard and shortening are limited.

Lower-fat cooking methods (baking, poaching, roasting, slow-cooking, broiling, grilling, steaming) are used most often.



Use Canada's Food Guide to help you plan meals.



How can a dietitian help?

[Dietitians](#) can support you with menu planning throughout many phases of your life from pregnancy to eating well when you are older. Counselling sessions with a dietitian can also help you to prevent and treat health conditions like diabetes and heart disease. Your dietitian will work with you to give you personalized nutrition advice that meets your lifestyle and goals. [Connect with a dietitian](#) today!

Bottom line

Making changes to your eating habits can feel daunting. Start with a few small changes each week using this checklist as a guide. Still feeling overwhelmed? Speak to a dietitian and they can help you with personalized goals.