

## Planning Meals: Teacher's Guide

**Objective:** To provide information on how to make meal preparation fun and easy.

### Introduction:

You may want to start by sharing a statement similar to this: ***“If meal planning and preparation is difficult for you and not enjoyable there are steps you can take to make meal preparation easier and even fun. We will brainstorm today as a group to offer ideas on how to make meal planning and preparation less difficult and more enjoyable.”***

### Sample ANCHOR questions for participants:

1. *“How do you decide what to cook for lunch or dinner?”*
2. *“What kind of meals/dishes does your family want you to prepare?”*
3. *“What kinds of things make it difficult for you to plan and prepare meals?”*

If during your discussion involving ANCHOR questions participants did not suggest topics they would like to learn about today you may want to ask:

*“What kind of information would be useful to you on planning meals?”*

**Background Information** - Choose the appropriate information below to **ADD** to your lesson.

Steps to make it easier to prepare meals.

1. Plan your menu(s).
2. Food Choices
3. Preparation

### 1. Healthful eating can be easy if you plan your menu.

- Plan your meals for the entire week.
- Use grocery store ads and make a shopping list at the same time. Planning ahead takes time and effort but it saves time by eliminating the need to do daily meal planning and frequent shopping. It usually saves money, too!
- Eat a variety of foods, serve both hot and cold foods, and plan foods that you can prepare in the time you have.
- Use fresh, frozen and canned foods to take advantage of food sales when you shop.
- Serve foods in season - best flavor, better prices and better quality.
- Purchase foods that can be stored for long periods of time.

- Make enough food for 2 meals and freeze one.
- Make meals and snacks from what you have on hand.

## 2. Wise Food Choices are the Key to Planning Quick and Convenient Meals

Sample question: ***“What foods do you keep on hand at all times?”***

- Keep the refrigerator stocked with a **variety** of foods.
- Balance your **high-fat** food choices with **low-fat** food choices.
- Prepare and freeze one-dish casseroles for later use.
- Purchase large cuts of meat that may be used for several meals. Example - whole chickens (cut-up and use for several meals like soups, salads, dumplings, etc.)
- Vary your methods of cooking (baking, broiling, etc.). However, when you use the oven, bake several foods at one time to save energy costs and time.

## 3. Time Saving Advice for Meal Preparation

Sample question: ***“What are some time-saving steps you use to make meal preparation easier?”***

- **Read through recipe or menu to familiarize your self with it. Assemble all ingredients and equipment needed.**
- **Clean up as you work, washing equipment or soaking it in water.**
- **Use quick cooking methods.**
  - Slice meat and poultry into thinner slices for faster cooking.
  - Use quick cooking foods like instant rice or instant potatoes.
- **Prepare “do-it-yourself” meals.**
  - Make sandwiches with whole grain bread, luncheon meat, cheese, lettuce and tomato. **OR** Make mini-pizzas on English muffins with veggies on top. Serve with fruit for a complete meal.
  - Take a can of soup and add leftovers like cooked meat, vegetables, rice or noodles.
- **Cook more than one meal at a time.**
  - Make enough food for 2 meals and freeze one.
  - Make an extra meal while one meal is simmering or baking.

- **Prepare some foods ahead of time and serve later.**
  - Cook dried beans, rice, macaroni, noodles and potatoes. Use in salads, casseroles, side dishes within 2 or 3 days.
  - Hard cooked eggs can be kept in the refrigerator for 3-4 days. Remove shell and store in a covered container.
  - Prepare molded (gelatin) salads and desserts one day ahead.
  - Many soups and stews improve in flavor on standing. Cook one day, cool quickly (refrigerate) and heat the next day.
  - Wash vegetables and fruits (except berries) before storing in refrigerator.
- **Simplify menus if this is acceptable to your family. A meal doesn't need to include many items to be nutritious.**

### **Tips for Freezing Foods:**

- Undercook vegetables, pastas, and grains before freezing. Or you can add the vegetables later, when the dish is reheated.
- Adjust the consistency of sauces and gravies by adding liquid after thawing.
- Seasonings such as onions, herbs and spices may change flavor during freezing. Add them during reheating.
- If you have frozen cheese that has crumbled upon thawing, it is still good to use in any food.
- If an ingredient won't freeze well, add it later. Example; freeze turkey sandwiches but add mayonnaise just before serving.

### **Activities (APPLY):**

1. Practice meal planning. Ask them to plan meals for one day. If time permits, plan meals for an entire week. Handouts – “Planning Meals”
2. Have participants make a list of foods that they would like have on hand in their kitchen. These are foods that can be purchased and stored for long periods of time (pasta, rice) or foods eaten everyday (milk, bread). Handout – “Basic Foods to Keep On Hand”
3. Talk about freezing extra meals (casseroles) so they can be served as another meal at a later time.

4. Talk about quick cooking methods. Demonstrate or have participants prepare some foods using these methods. These may include preparing some foods ahead of time to use later in meal preparation. Handouts – Tips for Quick Meals

**Handouts (AWAY):**

“Planning Meals”

“Basic Foods to Keep on Hand”

“Tips for Quick Meals”

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