



Week 4

Make a menu plan for dinner

This week let's look at:

- Make a menu plan for the week
- Eat dinner at home more than you eat out
- Train your eye for portion control

WHAT MAKES A HEALTHY, BALANCED MEAL?

Some days you might come home to an empty fridge, or you come home very hungry not feeling like cooking a meal. At times like this fast food, take away or microwave meals seem like an ideal option! They're quick, easy and effortless.

Before you know it, you have eaten a fish supper or a whole pizza smothered with processed meats and lots of cheese. At the time you may have thought that was a great idea, but you've consumed excess calories with very few nutrients and no whole grains or vegetables.

PLANNING AHEAD CAN HELP PREVENT THIS!

More and more meals are being eaten outside of the home, prepared convenience foods are cheaper and more widely available, enabling people to eat anywhere.

Meals provided in restaurants are usually served with very little vegetables, and most vegetable portions served in restaurants are so small they do not count as one of your 5 A-DAY.

These meals are high in fat, salt and sugar and low in vitamins and minerals. As an occasional treat that's fine but having these

a few times a week can affect your healthy eating routine.

To establish a healthy routine some planning, preparation and organisation is involved. The best way to control what you eat at dinnertime is to eat dinner as often as you can at home. As with breakfast and lunch, you are following the same formula for dinner.

YOUR DINNER PLATE SHOULD BE MADE UP OF HALF VEGETABLES, A QUARTER WHOLEGRAIN CARBOHYDRATE AND A QUARTER LEAN PROTEIN.

No more than 500g of red meat should be consumed weekly as consuming a large amount of red meat is linked to bowel cancer. Reduce consumption of processed or cured meats as well, as this has also been linked to certain types of cancer.

Fish should be eaten twice a week with one portion being oily fish and one portion of white fish.

One portion of protein such as, meat, poultry or fish should be roughly the size and thickness as the palm of your hand.

Look at your **FOOD & DRINK DIARY:**

What are you eating for dinner? How does your dinner compare to the balanced, healthy dinner model of lean protein, wholegrain carbohydrates, vegetables and fruit?

Are you missing any food groups or are you eating too much or too little of a certain food?

How often are you eating out for dinner or getting a take-away?

What changes can you make this week to improve what you are eating at dinner time?

If your goal is to make healthier choices when eating out, plan before you go. If bread is your weakness, ask your server not to bring it.

When ordering ask for salad dressings on the side and to leave the cheese out.

USE THE WEEKENDS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE as an opportunity to get organised and plan for the week ahead.

MAKE A MENU PLAN FOR THE WEEK and form a shopping list around this.

Order online and get your shopping delivered. The cost of the delivery service will be offset against the savings of food that you won't be buying on a

whim. If you will be late home some days, or you think you may be tempted to grab fast food on the way home, then cook a big batch of chicken casserole or chilli for example, pre-portion and freeze it. That way all you have to do is take it out of the freezer before you go to work and heat it up when you get home. If you know what you are going to be having for dinner before you leave for work, you will be less likely to turn to microwave or fast-food meals.

For most people dinner is the biggest meal of the day, so use it as an opportunity to get more fruit and vegetables into your diet. On average people only consume 3 portions of fruit and vegetables each day and only 15% manage to reach the recommended 5 A-DAY.

IF THERE ARE MORE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES ON YOUR PLATE THERE IS LESS ROOM FOR UNHEALTHY OPTIONS.

If you didn't manage to eat your 5 A-DAY during the day, here are some tips to get some extra vegetables into your evening meals:

ROAST YOUR VEGETABLES:

Roasting is a great way to cook vegetables and keep all the nutrients intact. If you

are having a roast dinner, make sure to put lots of different vegetables in with it, or if you are having a pasta dish, roast some vegetables and mix them through the pasta.

POACHING:

When poaching vegetables, boil enough water so the vegetables are covered. Once boiling, add the vegetables, turn down the heat to a simmer and leave for 6 – 7 minutes. The vegetables should have a little bite to them. Make sure not to overcook them or you will lose a lot of nutrients. Use a timer to help prevent this.

PASTA SAUCES, SOUPS, CASSEROLES OR STEWS:

Are a great opportunity to add lots of different vegetables like mushrooms, onions, peppers, celery, carrots etc. Use garlic, basil and other herbs for added flavour without having to use salt.

During the warmer months of the year make sure you still get extra vegetables by making a **SIDE SALAD** to go along with your meal. Stock up on foods such as, dark leafy greens, tomatoes, cucumber, spring onion, peppers, carrots and runner beans to make a delicious, colourful salad.

IF YOU FANCY SOMETHING SWEET

FOR DESSERT, CHOOSE FRUIT!

It can be frozen, tinned, dried or fresh – it all counts.

When you are preparing and cooking dinner, do you find yourself tasting and snacking on what you are cooking?

By the time you are ready to sit down and eat, have you eaten a portion already?

If this sounds like you there are ways to get around this:

IF YOU WANT SOMETHING TO SNACK ON WHILE COOKING

slice an extra carrot and nibble on that to keep you going until dinner is ready.

If you've cooked a recipe many times before you do not need to taste it.

When you are trying out a new recipe for the first time, **TASTE USING A TEASPOON** – don't use a wooden spoon or a ladle as you will eat more!

Keep your **FOOD AND DRINK DIARY** at hand – record every sip and taste you have. It all counts!

DRINK WATER WHILE YOU ARE COOKING

After you have tasted something have a drink of water to cleanse the palate.

CHEW SOME SUGAR FREE GUM

while you cook, you're less likely to test-taste food then.

DON'T COOK WHEN YOU ARE HUNGRY

Have a cup of tea or herbal tea and a piece of fruit before you start cooking.

Don't let dinner be your downfall when you are trying to lose or maintain weight, or for eating healthily!

Our appetite is influenced by many things, including the sight of food and what people around us are eating. Whether you are eating at home, out with friends or grabbing something on the go, being mindful about portion control is very important as it affects your calorie intake.

EATING AT HOME

TO CHECK PORTION SIZE, YOU MAY BE WEIGHING OUT YOUR FOOD

- or you might be estimating portion size just by looking at foods?

Check how accurate you are and weigh out your portions. Are you close?

It is very useful to develop an eye for what a **STANDARD PORTION** size is. Then when you are eating out or eating with

friends when the portion size may be larger, you will be able to determine roughly how much you should be eating.

CHANGE THE PLATES YOU USE

If you use large plates, a bigger portion size seems more appropriate. Switching to a smaller plate for your meals will make a small portion look larger.

A study carried out by Cornell University found that people who were given a larger bowl ate 31% more ice cream compared to the people who were given a medium size bowl.

Also with drinks, **USE A TALL, SLENDER GLASS** instead of a short wide glass. According to research, people poured 28% more into a short, wide glass than when drinking from a tall, slender glass.

PRE-PORTION MEALS

Serve food onto the plates in the kitchen rather than putting serving bowls on the table. This will **PREVENT SECOND HELPINGS**. Place any leftovers in containers and save it for lunch next day, or an evening meal later in the week or pop it in the freezer for when you need it.

BE MINDFUL OF WHAT YOU ARE EATING WITH NO DISTRACTIONS

Focus on eating your food, don't do anything else - don't drive, don't watch TV, just eat and enjoy your food. Notice the taste, texture and smell of your food.

MULTI-TASK WHILE YOU ARE EATING MAKES OVEREATING MORE LIKELY

Doing chores or jobs while eating and not fully concentrating on what you are eating, means you're not fully aware of what you have eaten, and you have not taken the time to enjoy the food in front of you.

ALWAYS SIT DOWN WHEN EATING A MEAL OR A SNACK EAT SLOWLY, GET MORE ENJOYMENT AND SATISFACTION FROM YOUR FOOD

This will help you to know when you are full. Your body usually takes around 20 minutes to signal to the brain that you are full and have eaten enough. Eating slowly can be a challenge for some people, but if you eat your food too quickly you may end up eating more than you need.

Put your cutlery down between mouthfuls, chat at the table, have a sip of water. Don't rush to eat, take time to enjoy your food.

Research has been carried out on hormones regulating hunger and satiety, looking at the role of cholecystokinin (CCK) and leptin for our appetite and hunger levels. It suggests that leptin increases the CCK signals to boost feelings of fullness. Obese people may suffer from leptin resistance which means that they are less responsive to the effects of leptin.

More research is needed in this area, but it is still important to take your time when you eat to enjoy your food!

STOP EATING AS SOON AS YOU START TO FEEL FULL

EATING OUT AT RESTAURANTS

Food served in restaurants maybe higher in fat, sugar, salt and refined carbohydrates.

Butter, cream, salt and sugar are used liberally by chefs when they cook, even on the vegetables. Portions served in restaurants are also larger than you would serve yourself at home.

YOU CAN EAT HEALTHILY WHEN EATING OUT

Plan-ahead, be organised and have a look at the restaurant's menu online.

Most restaurants have menus available online, along with the nutritional information for each dish. You can then decide what to eat ahead of time before you arrive at the restaurant. Having a plan of what you are going to order gives you more control when eating out and will leave you feeling less stressed about what you will be eating.

When eating out, we can easily be influenced by what the people we are dining with are ordering.

To avoid this, be the first to order, you may then influence others to order healthier choices. If you are trying to lose weight, eating multiple courses isn't the best strategy as it can lead to eating excess calories.

Studies have shown that if you start with a small salad or a broth soup, this will help to curb your appetite, and you are less likely to overeat for the rest of the meal.

ASK HOW THE FOOD IS BEING COOKED

Avoid foods that have been fried, this will add a lot of extra fat and calories. Choose meals that have used baking, broiling, grilling or sautéing as cooking methods. Order extra vegetables.

Vegetable portions served in restaurants are usually quite small, order extra to fill your plate!

BE MINDFUL OF DISHES WITH GRAVY AND CREAM-BASED SAUCES

Gravy is usually made from the meat juices in the pan where the meat was cooked, this can be high in saturated fat. Cream-based sauces are also high in saturated fat.

Ask to have gravy and sauces on the side so that you can control how much you have.

SHARE DESSERT

Finish your meal with something sweet, ask for more spoons and share dessert with others at your table. You can still enjoy the sweet taste with a fraction of the calories, fats and sugars! If you feel full after your main course don't force yourself to order dessert - you'll feel bloated and uncomfortable, have a cup of tea or coffee instead.

PARTYTIME AND SOCIAL OCCASIONS

When socialising at parties, wedding receptions or other occasions, there can be plenty of temptations available.

LOOK OUT FOR HEALTHIER OPTIONS:

- Fill your plate with plenty of vegetables.
- If you like dips go for a yogurt-based or tomato-based dip, rather than the sour cream varieties.
- Fruit and fruit salads are also a good choice.
- Many of the fancy desserts, mini quiches, Scotch eggs, sausage rolls, mozzarella sticks etc are high in salt, sugar, saturated fat and calories.

IF YOU FEEL TEMPTED, BE SENSIBLE, CHOOSE ONE AS A TREAT!

Healthier choices include prawn cocktail, sugar-free jelly, bread sticks, rice cakes or a small handful of nuts.

To help control the amount of food you eat, use a small plate and have one visit to the buffet.

HAVE A LOW-CALORIE DRINK

while you're eating.

- If you're drinking alcohol, alternate it with a non-alcoholic beverage.
- 2 large glasses (250ml) of white wine have around 370kcal (20% of the recommended daily calorie intake for most women).
- A pint of beer has around the same amount calories as a packet of crisps.

- Drinking a couple of pints a few times a week, adds up to a lot of calories from alcohol over time.
- 1 medium glass wine (175ml) = 126kcal
- 50ml glass of cream liqueur = 118kcal
- Pint of beer (strength 5%) = 170kcal
- 330ml alcopop (strength 5%) = 237kcal

Excess alcohol intake can easily contribute to weight gain as well as affect your overall health.

NOTES