

11 tips to make meal planning a breeze

The appeal for quick and healthy meals is just that. It's quick AND healthy. But to actually create meals in a relatively short timeframe (say 30-40 minutes from start to finish), there is some work required on the front end. Aside from the health benefits of meal planning, you'll also end up saving yourself some precious resources – time and money.

Here are a few tips to help make meal planning a success, and preserve your sanity on busy weekdays:

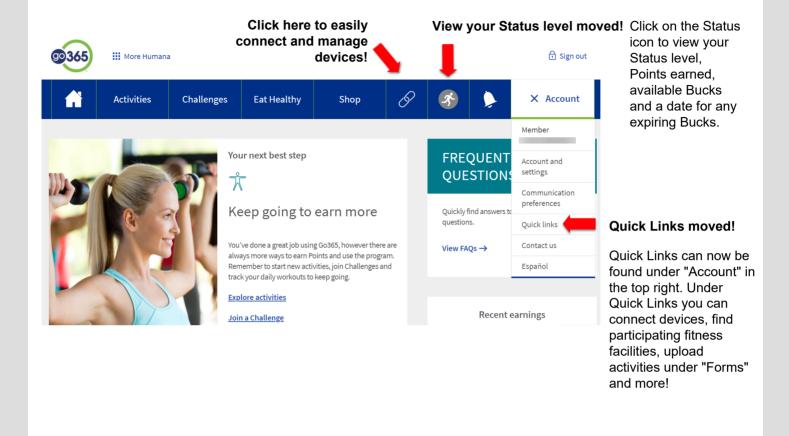
- 1.Shop your pantry, refrigerator and freezer before making your grocery list to determine what you need.
- 2. Think seasonal. This will add variety to your meals and save you money.
- 3. Think about ways to use ingredients in various ways. For example, ground turkey meat can be used to make turkey chili for dinner one night and lunches such as turkey tacos or burgers the next day.
- 4.Jot down healthy breakfast and snack items you (and your family) will eat throughout the week. Think string cheese, cut up or whole fruit, chopped vegetables and hummus, nuts, and granola and yogurt.
- 5. Check coupons to save money while also planning your meals.
- 6.Organize your grocery list by section to save even more time shopping. Group all fruits and vegetables together, dairy, meats, etc.
- 7. Prepare food when you come home from the store.
- 8. Assemble snack-size portions so you're ready to go for the week ahead.
- 9.Create standard meals. Don't throw away your menus at the end of the week. Instead, hold on to them and reuse later.
- 10. Try a themed night. For example, Monday night is homemade pizza night and Thursdays are chicken nights. Try new recipes on these nights to mix things up.
- 11. Use meal planning magazines and/or websites to shake things up.







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