

Meals and Snacks Made Easy

Families today lead busy lives balancing work, school, and play. Plan ahead for at-home easy meals and snacks. When dining out, choose healthier menu items.

Plan to make meals ahead of time. Make sure you have lunch boxes, food containers, and ice packs. Also, have a large pot or crockpot on hand for batch cooking. You can double a recipe and freeze half of it. This works well with stews, taco filling, and casseroles. For meal planning information and recipes, go to WIChealth.org and select **Health eKitchen**. Ask WIC staff how to access WIChealth.org.

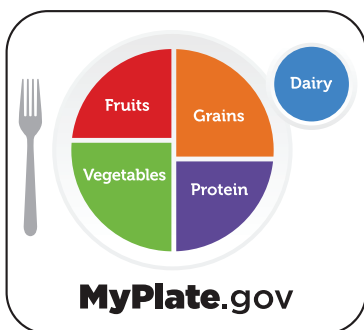
When dining out, order healthy menu items. Choose a side salad or fruit instead of fries. Order a grilled chicken sandwich instead of a burger or a fried chicken sandwich. If you want fries, get a small size instead of medium or large. Instead of sugary drinks, order water, unsweetened tea, or lowfat milk. Plan ahead for baby when eating out—bring jars of baby food or other healthy foods.

Nothing quenches thirst better than water. Have a pitcher of water cooled in the refrigerator so family members can drink water when they are thirsty. When you are away from home, bring bottles of water with you in a cooler or use insulated bottles that keep the water cool. This will save you time and money—you won't need to stop to buy a drink.

When preparing quick meals and snacks, focus on healthy eating with MyPlate.gov:

Fruits

- Start your day with fruit at breakfast—top cereal with your favorite seasonal fruit or add bananas or chopped apples to pancakes.
- Keep ready-to-eat fruits in the refrigerator for a quick snack.
- For dinner, chop up fresh, frozen, or canned fruits to make a quick fruit salsa to top fish or chicken.
- Add fruit such as orange sections, sliced pears, or grapes (cut in quarters) to a salad.



Vegetables

- Wash and cut up fresh vegetables and portion them into reusable containers so they're ready when needed.
- Try a stir-fry with fresh or frozen vegetables for a quick meal or easy side dish.

Dairy

- Spoon yogurt over fresh or canned fruit for a snack.
- Milk or cheese can be easily included in a meal or snack.

Whole Grains

- Make your own trail mix with whole grain cereal.
- Enjoy whole wheat tortillas with sliced turkey or chicken, avocado, shredded carrots, and hummus.

Protein Foods

- Plant protein foods such as canned beans, peas, and lentils; tofu; peanut butter; nuts; and seeds can be added to a meal or snack without the need for cooking.
- Keep hard-cooked eggs in the refrigerator for a snack or to add to a salad.
- To include seafood in your meals each week, prepare a lunchtime sandwich with canned light tuna and make some fish tacos for dinner.

Prevent Choking

When preparing meals or snacks for children under 4 years of age, avoid the following foods to prevent choking: popcorn, nuts, seeds, large chunks of meat or cheese, hard pieces of vegetables or fruits (fresh or dried), hard candies, marshmallows, chips, whole grapes, and fish or meat with bones. Peanut butter or nut butter should only be given when spread thinly on crackers or toast; or thinned and blended into foods.

Traveling and Breastfeeding

When traveling, some moms find it easier to breastfeed directly, while others prefer giving their breastmilk in a bottle. Choose the option that feels right for you. If you plan to pump while traveling, make sure you have bags and bottles to store your milk. Bring a cooler with ice packs and place your expressed breastmilk into a refrigerator or freezer as soon as you can.

