

Easy Tips for Health Family Meals

As a parent, you can reinforce these healthy choices into your family's meals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has developed a website to help you plan healthy meals for your family that follow the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. You can locate this free menu planner at www.mypyramidtracker.gov/planner. Below are additional suggestions and recipes to help your family eat healthy meals and snacks on a regular basis.

Ten Easy Tips for Healthy Family Meals

1. Add extra vegetables to casseroles or spaghetti sauce to increase the nutrient content of meals.
2. Keep fresh fruit handy for quick snacks.
3. Add extra vegetables to frozen pre-made dinners.
4. Season foods with fresh herbs in place of salt.
5. Puree juice-packed canned fruit for a sweet pancake topping.
6. Use vanilla yogurt for a quick fruit dip.
7. Use whole grain pasta or brown rice in recipes to increase fiber and whole grains.
8. Use fruit as a dessert item instead of cakes and cookies.
9. Add beans to recipes, beans can accompany almost any food. They are nutritious and inexpensive.
10. Make it a goal to serve food from all five food groups at dinner: whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy foods, and lean meats.

No time to cook? Here are a few healthy staples to keep on hand:

- Canned fruits in light or natural juice
- Canned vegetables (low sodium)
- Canned beans
- Tomato sauce
- Instant brown rice
- Fresh fruit in season
- Canned Tuna and Chicken
- Lettuce, onions, carrots

These items can be used to make quick, simple meals when you are in a hurry.