

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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As busy as we all are these days, it's a rare person who has time to plan, prepare and sit down to eat healthy meals every day of the week. If you are one of them, you must be the envy of your neighbors. For the rest of us though, it helps to be reminded sometimes of what's really important for keeping going and keeping our health. No matter how busy your day, you won't be able to keep it up for years to come unless you are putting in the right fuel for your internal engines. Here are a few pointers to help keep you going.

First, remember that it's not important if you get four food groups at each meal. The important thing is to get a balance over the whole day, or even over several days. If you only managed one vegetable on your plate today, make sure that tomorrow you get a few extra servings.

Next remember that there is nothing magic connected to three square, hot meals a day. If 4 or 5 or 6 mini-meals fit your schedule better, eat that way. Cold can be just as good as hot. Leftovers are fine, so are *some* fast foods.

But do remember that these are mini-MEALS. Five of those 6 mini-meals can not be granola bars and a soda! Have a fruit and bagel in your hand as you head out the door in the morning. Grab a light yogurt and a granola bar for a mid-morning mini-meal. A veggie and cheese small sub with a fruit smoothie works for lunch. Baby carrots and half a pita bread with hummus dip before you head home will cut the hunger pangs so you don't overeat at dinner.

If you're in a real rush, go ahead, have a slice of pizza for dinner. Just ask them to go light on the cheese and add extra vegetables. It's the sausage or pepperoni that adds extra grease, so get ham or turkey for less fat. Add a side salad, and bring your own single-serve fruit cup for dessert. When you finally manage to sit down for a bit of TV before crashing, instead of a bowl of ice cream have reduced-fat popcorn and a glass of milk.

If you noticed, there's only about 3 hours between each 'meal'. That's important. Try to never go more than 5 hours without eating. You won't get so hungry that you grab whatever is handy, or eat twice as much as you need because you're starving.

No matter what your eating pattern, 3 meals a day or six, remember to read the labels on what you buy. Aim for foods that have less than 3 grams of fat for each 100 calories per serving. This will keep your menu below 30% of calories from fat. Look for foods with less saturated fat and no trans fat. Starting in January every food label will have to declare the amount of trans fat. Avoid it!

Try to keep the sodium below 300 mg per 'meal'. There are more and more reduced sodium foods appearing on the grocery shelves. If you want to use a frozen meal, for example a sausage and peppers mixture, do so. But to reduce the amount of salt per serving, use one package of prepared dinner mixture to serve 6 instead of 3. Add plenty of extra low-sodium vegetables to increase the servings, and serve it over brown rice or barley cooked without salt.

If too many of your meals come from fast food, order grilled instead of breaded or fried chicken or fish. Tell them "No Mayo", and put the salad dressing on the side. Use only half the package. There are several fruit options now, pick them. And ask for low-fat milk or diet soda instead of regular. It's your body, and your money, so have the

meal your way too!

This week's recipe is quick to prepare, and while it bakes you can be taking a shower or reading the paper. Use whatever vegetables your family prefers. Open a bag of salad mix, slice in a tomato, and dinner is ready.

Cookie-Sheet Chicken

4-6 chicken breasts or thighs, skin removed	1 cup barbeque sauce
1 green pepper, sliced	1 can green beans, drained
2 carrots, peeled and sliced	2 zucchini, washed and sliced

Preheat oven to 350° F. Line cookie sheet with a sheet of aluminum foil a little larger than the sheet. Pour ½ C of sauce on foil. Put chicken and vegetables on sheet. Pour rest of sauce on top. Cover with a second layer of foil, and fold edges together to seal.

Bake 35 min, or until thermometer reaches 170° F in center of a piece of meat.

Serves 4-6.

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