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For Better Living
Fix it Fast and Healthy

Planning meals ahead instead of waiting until the last minute increases the likelihood that meals are nutritious. You may choose to plan a week ahead or just a few days, whichever works best with your schedule.

Planning menus can help guide your grocery shopping. Create a master list to increase your shopping efficiency. Select categories such as meats, dairy products, produce, canned goods, cereals, frozen foods, etc. Grouping foods by category will eliminate backtracking in the store.

Shop in stores that you are familiar with. This will reduce time spent looking for certain items.

Try to avoid the rush hours. Shop when the aisles and lines are not crowded.

Using prepared ingredients also shortens your preparation time. When balancing your time and money, buy some ingredients such as bagged lettuce, prepared chicken breast for stir-fry or shredded cheese.

To help get food on the table faster, follow these tips:

- Keep a well-stocked refrigerator and pantry. This avoids extras trips to the grocery store.
- Do some of your preparations the night before.
- Multitask while cooking.
- Choose larger saucepans to speed heating.
- Combine cooking time and family time. Get your children involved in food preparation.
- To save cleanup, mix, cook and serve in the same dish.

Fast and Healthy Meal Ideas

Main Dish Soups - Make soups with a variety of vegetables, whole grains and legumes. Soups can also be made ahead and reheated quickly when needed. They also freeze well.

Chicken- Whether you're baking, grilling or stewing chicken, prepare a few extra pieces for later. They can be diced for chicken salad, casseroles, etc.

Ground Beef- Cook ground beef or turkey with your basic seasonings and then drain, rinse and freeze. When you're ready to use it, simply thaw, rinse with warm water to remove any additional fat and add to dishes for spaghetti, casseroles, stews, etc.

Marinate meat before freezing - Divide meat into resealable bags. Add your favorite marinade and refrigerate overnight before freezing. This will save time after thawing.

Light, Quick Dessert Ideas

-Angel Food Cake - Just add water to angel food cake mix, whip and bake. Serve topped with

fresh fruit.

- Make fruit crisp with oatmeal, less butter and less sugar. Top with light whipped topping.
- Light frozen yogurt or iced milk topped with fruit makes a cool summer dessert.
- Make a parfait by layering lemon yogurt or pudding with peaches and ginger snap crumbs.

Select the tips that will fit your lifestyle. Incorporate them into your weekly routine and hopefully you will see a difference in the same of extra time you have.

Source: West Virginia Cooperative Extension