



Shape Up Your Workplace

A monthly series brought to you by Get Healthy CT

Workplace Wellness Idea #29: Encourage Meal Planning and Preparation

Get Healthy CT aims to provide businesses with ideas that will facilitate healthy behaviors of their employees to improve employee satisfaction, productivity and showcase the employer as a role model for health. To support this, we will provide a “Workplace Wellness Idea” each month that employers can implement at low or no cost.

Why try meal planning?

Planning weekly meals can help busy working adults stick to their healthy eating goals. In addition, taking a small amount of time each week to prepare meals for the week ahead can help to avoid those quick and often unhealthy last minute food decisions. The goal to make meal planning successful is to find a process that works for you. Get Healthy CT has compiled a list of easy meal planning and meal preparation tips to help you get started today.

Things to Consider Before Meal Planning

How many meals do you need to plan for? Decide how many meals you’ll need to get through the upcoming week. Don’t forget to include plans for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Keep in mind that making meals in larger batches will allow for leftovers for additional mealtimes.

What do you have time for? If you have a busy work week coming up, you may want to choose meals that are simple to make and can be served up quickly, such as ones you can make in a slow cooker.

What do you want to eat in the next week? Your food choices may be influenced by the weather (hot or cold) or by what produce is in season. Thinking about these things in advance will help make the recipe selection process easier.

What is your budget? Decide how much you want to spend and stick to your budget. Plan meals around which fruits and vegetables are in season, what is currently on sale and what ingredients you already may have in your freezer or pantry.

See page 2 for more meal planning tips and a healthy soup recipe!

Meal Planning and Meal Preparation Tips

Try new recipes- Look online, in recipe books and ask friends for new healthy recipes ideas. Our favorite recipe resources include: **EatingWell.com** and **ChooseMyPlate.gov**. These links and others can be found on GetHealthyCT.org.

Use a weekly meal planner- Once you find new recipes you want to try, go ahead and plan your meals for the next week. A useful tool to help create your plan for the upcoming week can be found at: www.choosemyplate.gov/budget-weekly-meals



Go grocery shopping with your plan- Once you create your own Grocery Game Plan, use those recipe ingredients to build your weekly grocery shopping list. This will help ensure you get all the items you need to create your planned meals, as well as help you stay on budget but not buying unnecessary items.

Pick one day of the week to prep several meals- Select one day each week when you may have a little more time to devote to meal preparation. Sundays may work well for some people. Set aside some time on that day to prepare larger meals that you can eat throughout the week.

Double your recipes- You can make large batches of certain foods, like soups, and eat them throughout the week or freeze them for a quick meal option at a later date. The soup recipe below can be used to get you started.

Minestrone

1. 28-ounce can diced tomatoes
2. 1 32-ounce container vegetable or low-sodium chicken broth
3. 1 15-ounce can cannellini (or other white) beans
4. 1 15-ounce can kidney beans (optional)
5. 1 9- or 16-ounce package frozen green beans
6. 1 5-ounce bag fresh spinach or one 10-ounce box frozen spinach, thawed
7. 1/2cup (2 ounces) grated Parmesan
8. ½ tsp salt and ¼ tsp black pepper



In a large pot, over medium heat, bring the tomatoes and their liquid to a simmer. Cook for 2 minutes. Add the broth, cannellini, and kidney beans (if using) and bring to a simmer. Add the green beans and cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Add salt, pepper, and spinach and stir until wilted. Ladle the soup into bowls and sprinkle with the Parmesan. Serve with the bread.

Source: www.realsimple.com

For more information, please visit GetHealthyCT.org

Let's work together to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in the workplace!