

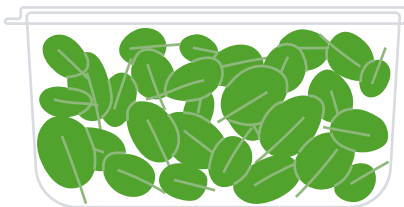


# PLANNING FAST AND HEALTHY DINNERS

After a busy day, you need a quick and nutritious meal on the menu. Make it happen with the tips below.

## Make Dinner Plans

- ▶ Set a regular day and time to plan your dinners for the coming week, allowing for special nights, like when you order pizza or eat out. Consider going meatless at least 1 day per week with a healthy meal that includes plant-based foods like whole grains, beans or lentils, and vegetables.
- ▶ Base your meals on these foods: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, fat-free or low-fat milk and yogurt, and reduced-fat cheese.



← Include nutritious short cuts. Frozen vegetables, prewashed salad greens, rotisserie chicken, canned tuna and salmon, canned beans, and quick-cooking brown rice are just a few options that can help you trim time when making dinner.

- ▶ Make a shopping list of the foods and ingredients you need to prepare your dinners for the week, preferably organized by the aisles of your supermarket for a speedier trip. To save even more time, order groceries online for curbside pickup at the store or delivery to your door.



← Get a head start. When you get home from the store, review your recipe. If needed, wash, cut up, and refrigerate recipe ingredients. On the weekend, make a double batch of soup, chili, or stew. Enjoy ½ during the week and freeze ½ in meal-sized portions to defrost for another time. In the morning, set up a slow cooker with the evening's meal so that it's ready when you arrive home. Get started with the hearty **Slow Cooker Lentil Soup** recipe on the next page.

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## SLOW COOKER LENTIL SOUP

Makes: 6 servings

The rich and delicious flavors of cooked carrots, onions, celery, and lentils make this a savory and quick-to-assemble slow cooker soup.

*Tip:* To boost flavor, season with your favorite dried herbs and spices during the last 60 minutes of cooking. Basil, oregano, thyme, bay leaves, and cumin go well with lentils. For a little kick, add a few red pepper flakes.

### Ingredients

- ▶ 6 cups water
- ▶ ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped (optional, or 2 tablespoons dried parsley)
- ▶ 2 teaspoons beef bouillon (or 2 cubes beef bouillon)
- ▶ 1½ cups lentils (dry; rinsed and sorted)
- ▶ 2 carrots (medium, sliced)
- ▶ 1 onion (medium, chopped)
- ▶ 2 celery stalks (sliced)

### Directions

1. Mix all ingredients together in slow cooker.
2. Cook on LOW for 8 to 10 hours or HIGH for 4 to 5 hours.
3. Serve hot with whole-grain crackers or bread.

*Adapted from: MyPlate Kitchen (ChooseMyPlate.gov).*

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## 5 Easy Entrée Ideas

Base the amounts you make on your family size.

1. **Create-Your-Own Stir-Fry:** In a large wok or sauté pan, heat 1 to 2 tablespoons of canola oil over medium-high heat. Add your protein of choice (for example, cubed firm tofu, skinless chicken, or lean beef) and cook several minutes until browned. Stir in your favorite thinly sliced or chopped vegetables, such as onions, garlic, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, and peppers, and continue to cook for about 5 minutes until the veggies are slightly softened. Flavor with small amounts of toasted sesame oil, low-sodium soy sauce, rice vinegar, or red pepper flakes. Serve with cooked brown rice.
2. **3-Bean Veggie Chili:** In a large pot, heat 1 tablespoon of canola oil. Add chopped vegetables (such as onions, garlic, peppers, and mushrooms), and cook until softened. Add canned diced tomatoes, rinsed and drained canned black, kidney, and navy beans, and chili seasonings, such as chili powder and cumin. Simmer for 20 minutes to let the flavors blend. Serve topped with (shredded) reduced-fat cheese, chopped tomato and lettuce, crumbled whole-grain tortilla chips, and low-fat sour cream or Greek yogurt.
3. **Pasta with Meat Sauce:** Cook whole-grain pasta according to package directions. For the sauce, cook lean ground beef, drain the fat, and heat with jarred tomato sauce (compare products to find a recipe with less sodium). Toss together the pasta and meat sauce. Serve with a salad and whole-grain rolls.
4. **Main Dish Salad:** Top a bed of prewashed salad greens or baby spinach with canned salmon or shredded rotisserie chicken, rinsed and drained canned chickpeas, and sliced tomato (or whichever veggies you have on hand). Drizzle with light vinaigrette dressing and serve with breadsticks.
5. **Diner Dinner:** Make scrambled eggs with leftover veggies (or your favorite egg preparation) and serve with Canadian bacon, whole-wheat toast, and 100% orange juice.