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April 2021 Newsletter

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Meal Prepping for the Whole Family

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The spring and summer months may be a busy time for your family. It may be hard to find time to sit down as a family for a healthy meal. For my family, who are involved in multiple sports, it is always easier to grab something quick and go. However, many convenience foods can lack important nutrients, leaving us craving more. The best way to combat the urge to grab an unhealthy meal is to have one already made!

Meal prepping can be simple. By preparing meals ahead, you are likely to eat healthier, save money and have less food go to waste. Win, win and win.

Tips for meal prepping:

- **Make a menu.** What are your meals for the week? What is in your cabinets that you can use?
- **Double it.** Double your recipe and freeze half of it to reheat later. You will have enough for two meals, cut down on ingredients that you will need to buy for the week and it will make cooking easier!
- **Shop, then prep.** Instead of putting your groceries directly into the fridge as soon as you get home, try prepping your fruits and vegetables. Wash and cut your vegetables to make them easy to grab and go.
- **Prepare and cook ahead.** Prepare your food for the week. I pick Sundays to do most of my prepping for the week. Pre-cut vegetables, thaw foods if needed, mix dressings and sauces, etc. Freeze perishable foods within 4 days.
- **Invest in meal containers.** Serving sizes matter! To help your family stick to recommended serving sizes, invest in meal prepping containers that have different size sections. This helps you plan a well-portioned and balanced meal that is easy to grab and go.
- **Keep it simple.** Stick to basic recipes or recipes that are “one sheet pan meals” or “one pot meals.”



Kids can help during meal prepping:

Toddlers (2-3 year olds). This age group picks up new tasks quickly, but need a lot of supervision. Motor skills are still developing. Give these children easy tasks, such as picking leaves off herbs, tearing up lettuce, sprinkling dried herbs and salt, kneading dough, stirring, mashing or whisking.

Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...



4-5 year olds. Children at this age have varying levels of focus, motor skills, and need for independence. Jobs that would suit this age group could vary between the toddler group and those in the 6-7 year old group.

6-7 year olds. At this age fine motor skills are further developed, allowing them to grate cheese, peel vegetables, crack eggs, grease pans, and pour and measure ingredients.

8-9 year olds. This is an age group where their skills could be either in the 6-7 year old group or in the 10-11 year old group. They may want to engage

in tasks such as scooping batter, skewering food, proofing yeast, and using a can opener.

10 years old and up. After assessment of their carefulness with sharp tools, heat, and food safety, this age group could be trusted with using a stove, a chef's knife, and much more with adult supervision.

Let's Talk

Explain to children that they are going to be an important part of the planning and preparing of meals for the week. With their help, the family can eat healthy, while saving time and money. Children's lifelong healthy habits are encouraged with practice and consistency. If there is a meal prepared in the refrigerator that is something they like or something they helped prepare, then the child may be more likely to eat and enjoy it.

Recipe for Health Beef Stir-Fry

Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless round steak
- 1 ½ cups reduced sodium beef broth
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 4 to 5 carrots, sliced diagonally
- ½ cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 cups fresh or frozen broccoli, chopped into bite-sized pieces
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- Hot cooked white rice or brown rice



Directions:

- 1) Partially freeze steak; slice across the grain into 3-by-¼-inch strips. Marinate for 1 hour in the refrigerator in beef broth.
- 2) Heat oil in a large skillet, coating sides. Continue to heat on medium-high for a minute.
- 3) Remove steak from marinade. Save marinade for step 6. Add steak to pan and stir-fry until browned.
- 4) Add carrots and soy sauce. Cook for 5-10 minutes, stirring often.
- 5) Add broccoli and cook until crisp-tender, stirring often.
- 6) In a small bowl, combine cornstarch, sugar and beef broth (marinade), mixing well; add to meat mixture in skillet.
- 7) Stir constantly until mixture is thickened and hot and bubbling.
- 8) Cook rice according to package directions. Serve over rice.

6 total Servings

Recipe from <https://healthyfamilies.tennessee.edu/recipe/beef-and-veggie-stir-fry/>

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