

Family Meals – **FAST**, Healthful!

You are running in 10 directions! It is 4 p.m. You need to pick up your child at day care, stop at the store, and run several errands. And you need to get ready for an evening meeting. How do you put a healthful supper on the table, too?



A few timesaving steps can help you prepare an easy family meal – with less stress. Use the time you save to enjoy your family.

Plan ahead.

- **Keep meals simple!** Food that keeps your family healthy can be quick to fix. Unless it is a special occasion, spend time together, not on making time-consuming meals!
- **Cook when you have more time –** maybe on weekends. Make soups, stews, or casseroles to freeze for the next week.
- **Do some tasks ahead –** a few hours or the day before your meal. Wash and trim vegetables or make fruit salad. (Your child can help.) Cook whole-grain noodles for pasta salad. Cook lean ground meat for tacos.



Three Quick-To-Fix Family Foods

- **Hearty soup:** Add canned or frozen vegetables to tomato or chicken soup.
- **Pasta dish:** Mix chopped lean ham or deli meat, and cooked vegetables into macaroni and cheese.
- **Hearty stuffed potato:** Serve homemade or canned chili over a baked potato or rice.



Remember that some canned foods are high in sodium. Check the Nutrition Facts label to select foods lower in sodium.

- **Your ideas:**

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Shop for time savers.

- **Buy partly prepared foods.** Try grated cheese, cut-up chicken, and mixed salad greens to save time. These foods often cost more, so check the price.
- **Stock your kitchen.** Get foods that you can make and serve in a hurry, such as:
 - Dried or canned fruit (juice or water pack)
 - Unsweetened frozen fruit
 - Vegetables and beans
 - Canned meat, poultry, and fish
 - Canned soups or stew
 - Whole-grain bread
 - Whole-grain pasta
 - Brown rice
 - Lowfat cheese
 - Lowfat yogurt
 - Frozen meals

Enjoy kitchen help.

- **Involve your little helper.** Ask your child to set the table, pour milk, or do other simple tasks. In time, children develop the skills and confidence to help even more. Preparing family meals also gives you time together, even on busy days.



Save time in your kitchen.

- **Cook once for everyone.** Does your child like plain vegetables, meat, rice, or noodles? If so, set some aside before you add other ingredients. You won't need to take time to prepare different foods.
- **Cook a fast way.** Broil, stir-fry, or microwave when you can. Roasting and baking take longer.
- **Make no-cook meals:** Try salads with canned tuna, chicken, or beans; cold sandwiches; raw vegetables and yogurt dip; and fruit. Kids like finger foods!
- **Double or triple the amount.** Cook for today and later. You can make enough meat sauce for spaghetti today and for topping a baked potato tomorrow.

Provided by _____