

Balanced Meals

What to include in a balanced meal?

- *Vegetables:* Build your meals around a colorful variety of fresh or frozen vegetables.
- *Whole grains:* Opt for whole or cracked grains such as quinoa, brown rice, barley, farro, wheat berries, wild rice, buckwheat, or bulger. Choose the whole grain version of your usual starch picks like whole grain pasta, whole wheat couscous, whole grain stuffing, breads, or dinner rolls. Corn products like tortillas, taco shells, and polenta make good choices, too. Starchy veggies such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, squash, corn, or peas are a great alternative to grains on your plate.
- *Protein:* Look for lean choices such as chicken breast, turkey breast, beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, veggie burgers, eggs, 95% lean beef, pork, fish, or seafood.

Create your meals with the right balance of nutritious foods to feel steady energy, focus and satiety through the day.



Tips:

- Follow the plate model: fill 1/2 your plate with colorful non-starchy vegetables and the rest with lean protein and whole grains or starchy veggies. Choose high fiber foods.
- Watch portion sizes: eat off smaller plates and wait 20 minutes before going back for seconds.
- Stock up on healthy staples and frozen vegetable options so you can assemble a healthy meal in minutes.
- Enjoy your meals slowly and fully by practicing mindful eating.

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What's for lunch or dinner?

Here are some suggestions for healthy, balanced meals. Please keep in mind that everyone has different needs. Work with your coach to find the best meal options for you!

Day	Complex Carbohydrate	Protein	Vegetable	Tips
1	Quinoa	Marinated baked chicken breast	Stir fried broccoli and/or cauliflower	Marinate a few chicken breasts at a time, eat within 3 days. Batch cook quinoa.
2	Wild rice	Glazed baked salmon	Grilled asparagus	Make extra asparagus - tastes great cold in a salad.
3	Barley	Lean sausage	Carrots, turnips, celery, parsley, ginger	Cook up everything in a big pot for satisfying, comforting soup.
4	Whole wheat pasta	95% lean ground beef meatballs	Mixed colorful side salad, tomato sauce for the pasta	Double the recipe and freeze extra portions for when you don't have time to cook.
5	Oven roasted root vegetables	Tofu/tempeh	Sauteed spinach and garlic	Tofu and tempeh come marinated in different flavors. Find them in the produce department.
6	Brown rice	Lentils	Rubbed kale salad with beets	Kale salad doesn't wilt quickly. Make extra for the next day.
7	Whole corn tortilla	Lean ground turkey or soy crumbles	Shredded cabbage, carrots and salsa	Add a bit of guacamole for some healthy fat.

Time savers:

- Batch cook on weekends. Portion meals out and freeze. Pull out only what you need each day.
- Frozen vegetables are nutritious, quick and easy. Plus, they won't spoil as quickly as fresh ones.
- Buy pre-cooked lean meats and poultry.
- Any food can be a balanced meal. Think outside the box! Breakfast is always good for dinner too. An egg white omelet with veggies and whole wheat toast comes together quickly. Whole grain high fiber cereal with low-fat milk or Greek yogurt is even faster!

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Meals on the go:

- Sandwich/Wrap: choose whole grain bread/wraps, a filling protein such as tuna, egg salad, or chicken breast, and top with grilled zucchini slices, lettuce, tomatoes, or eat with a side salad or soup.
- “Lunch Box”: pack some healthy finger foods following the plate model. For a vegetable crudité, choose baby tomatoes, persian cucumbers, string beans. For proteins, consider boiled eggs, edamame, hummus, string cheese, tuna/salmon, or chicken sausage. For starches, whole grain crackers or rolls make a good choice.
- Salad “Parfait”: In a Mason jar, layer shredded greens, colorful veggies (beets, carrots, grape tomatoes, purple cabbage, cucumber, celery, bell pepper, radish, etc), a protein (chicken, egg, beans, chickpeas, tofu, feta, etc), something starchy (quinoa, sweet potatoes, beans, etc), and a touch of healthy fat (slice of avocado, nuts, seeds). Add 1-2 tablespoons of dressing or oil and vinegar - shake and enjoy!
- Fruit/Vegetable Smoothie: Use milk/milk substitute, yogurt, or protein powder as your base and add your favorite fruit (1 serving) and vegetables (2-3 servings).
- On-the-Go Bars: Look for high protein or high fiber bars low in added sugars. Protein and fiber help increase fullness. Look for bars with a small number of real-food ingredients.

Where do I start? Some suggestions:

- I will plan a balanced, healthy dinner 2-3 days this week.
- I will include at least 1 serving of vegetables with lunch 3 days this week.
- I will include only whole grain breads, rice, and pastas in my dinners (even when I’m eating out).
- I will measure my portions for dinner at least once this week.