

## **Cooking and Meal Planning**

### The 3 P's – Planning, Purchasing, and Preparing

#### **Planning –**

- \*Establish a budget.
  - Think about how much money you have to spend on food. Each person's budget will be different based on their situation and income.
  - Remember to include meals that you eat out in your food budget.
  - Make sure to budget for non-food items such as dish soap, toilet paper, paper towels, and laundry soap.
  
- \*Plan meals and snacks for the week or month based on your established budget.
  - Check your cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer to see what you already have on hand and can be used in your meal plan.
  - Remember to use MyPlate to make sure you have a nutritious balance.
  - Consider the use of leftovers when planning your meals.
  
- \*Find quick and easy recipes online. Sources for recipes include:
  - MyPlate Kitchen – <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplatekitchen>
  - Food Hero – <https://www.foodhero.org/recipes/healthy-recipes>
  
- \*Use your meal plan to develop your grocery store list.
  - Again, check your cupboards, refrigerator, and freezer to avoid purchasing items you already have on hand.

#### **Purchasing –**

- \*Buy groceries when you are not hungry and when you are not rushed.
- \*Stick to your grocery list and stay out of aisles that do not contain items on your list.
- \*Buy store brands, if cheaper.
- \*Find and compare unit prices listed on shelves to get the best price.
- \*Choose fresh fruits and vegetables in season; buy canned vegetables with less salt.
- \*Use nutrition facts labels to help you choose healthier options.
- \*Pre-cut fruits and vegetables, individual cups of yogurt, and instant rice and hot cereal are convenient, but usually cost more than those that require a bit more preparation time.

#### **Preparing –**

- \*Some meal items can be prepared in advance; pre-cook on days when you have more time.
- \*Try a few meatless meals (example: substituting beans for meat) to save money.
- \*Consider ways to incorporate leftovers into additional meals.
- \*Remember food safety!

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