

The Wellness Family

Dr. Cuperus Keeps You Informed

W e l l n e s s M e a l P l a n n i n g

Open any newspaper or magazine and you can't help but see that the rising rate of obesity has become a concern for everyone and there are more and more cases of diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol and cancer than there has been in the last 20 years. So, what's the explanation?

The fact is that no one knows for sure, but the Western diet could very well be the culprit. Wanting to live a wellness lifestyle is more than just a desire to live healthier, but to be healthier, and that begins with what we are consuming.

Building Blocks

Many parents are coming to recognize that what their children are eating is what their bodies are using to grow. If a child is consuming chemically or genetically altered foods, then that is what their children's bodies are using to manufacture muscle, tissues and bone.

In many cases there are no vitamins or minerals in what their children are eating. So what does the body do with what they've consumed? It processes it and sends most of it away as waste.

Healthy Eating

The healthiest home is one where you live out of the refrigerator, as foods that require refrigeration are fresh and need to be eaten quickly. Our bodies require living foods to nourish us.

In a truly healthy home you're going to starve in the cupboards. Packaged foods that have a long shelf-life are typically full of preservatives and other unhealthy chemicals which allow them that long shelf-life.

Very little of your meal preparation should require items from the pantry or even the freezer, since freezing an item causes a loss of vitamins and minerals. Living, natural, whole foods should be the bulk of your diet. Unfortunately, the majority of people find most of their food items in boxes or packages, the exact opposite.

Why a menu?

The first step to healthier eating is to have a menu prepared for the week. Not only will this help with

grocery shopping and avoiding waste but also, when meals aren't planned enough in advance, families will typically resort to a quick trip through the drive-thru or other fast food alternatives.

Expecting to walk into your home after a busy day at work and convince yourself to prepare a healthy, wholesome meal is unrealistic. If your family has resorted to the Western Diet of convenience, then it will be too easy to fall back into old habits. Unfortunately, this lifestyle has led to this alarming statistic: the average family eats fast food four times a week.

A Menu Chart

A great way to organize and prepare your menu each week is with a mix-and-match menu chart. Using a large piece of poster board, draw out seven columns and label them for each day of the week.



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The menu items can be recipe cards that you already have or can be prepared for this project. If you plan on creating new recipe cards for this project, a fun thing to do is color-coding your cards; entrées or proteins can be blue, vegetable dishes can be on green, fruits can be yellow, starches on red (as a "warning" that they should be limited), etc. These cards can either be handwritten on color index cards or can be printed on card stock and trimmed. Sticky velcro-dots, which can be purchased at any craft and most office supply stores, will make mounting the recipe cards to the board easily.

Once you have two weeks worth of recipes cards, the fun begins. Place an entrée card and a vegetable or fruit card on each day of the week. Remember to limit the number of starches being served in a week's time. As time progresses, this is a wonderful opportunity for children to get involved in the meal planning. In some cases, for younger children that want to be involved, you may wish to mount the board low enough for everyone to get in on the action.

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Menu Planning Software

If the menu chart does not work for your family then consider investing in meal planning software. There are several options.

Mastercook is the most popular menu planning software that integrates recipes with menu planning and grocery list preparation. Most other software and online recipe services offer the ability to import or export recipes in *Mastercook* format.

Cook'n Recipe Organizer is a complete system to help you manage recipes, plan meals and menus, import and export recipes, create shopping lists, and will even suggest meals based on what you have on hand.

EzyEating, available at www.ezyeating.com, is a very affordable meal planning software; similar to the more expensive programs, but offering a free demo version so you can try it before you decide to invest.

Mastercook and *Cook'n Recipe Organizer* are available at Amazon.com or any software retailer.

Preparing for the Week

For families with a little flexibility in their schedules, the best way to eat is to shop two or three times a week for two to four days at a time. Do your grocery shopping based on your menu choices for those two to four nights and purchase what is necessary to fix those meals. Lunch items should be equally healthy and purchased in moderation to avoid waste.

For those with less schedule flexibility, Saturday or Sunday should be your grocery shopping and preparation day. Based on your menu for the week, purchase what is needed for those specific meals.

Items that can be prepared and then put in a dish and frozen for cooking later should be used for your Thursday and Friday meals. Items that can be put in a slow cooker for all day cooking can also typically be frozen and then defrosted closer to the day of use.

Wellness Recipes

When preparing your recipe cards remember that you are looking for entrées that are high in protein and low in carbohydrates, and vegetable dishes that can be either a side dish or an entrée depending upon the needs of your family.

It's important to realize that there is no perfect recipe source that will have only the best nutritionally balanced food items to recommend or suggest. With much of your recipe collection you'll need to use your best judgment about what is going to be healthy for you and your family.

However, to get you started the following websites offer some really great choices:

www.wholefoodsmarket.com/recipes/
www.livingwithout.com/topics/meals.html
www.rachaelraymag.com/recipes

In Summary

Meal planning is one part of a wellness lifestyle that can be the most challenging. Remember that it will take time to turn bad nutritional habits around.

Your Family Wellness Chiropractor can be a resource for healthy menu items and good nutritional advice. If you would like to know how you're doing with your meal choices, keep a diary of what your family is eating for two weeks, then give it to your Doctor of Chiropractic to review and provide recommendations.

Dear Parent,

Dr. Cuperus is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.

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