

NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE

Greater Opportunities of the Permian Basin Head Start

August 2023

Back to school means new routines, extracurricular activities, and busy schedules. It also means interactions with new people, and that sometimes can lead to more germs and illness for your toddler. Making it important to feed your family and feed them well.

Juggling the uptick in routine and healthy dinners, however, can be a struggle. Starting the year with a plan and setting routines early will lead you to success, better nutrition, and a reduction in sick days for you and your little ones. Here's a few tips to help you get started:

Write out a routine. Using an old school pen and paper system, write out a morning and evening routine that works for your family. What time do you want to wake up? How long will it take you to dress? When will you wake your children? Be specific in writing out what you will do and when you will do. Then, set alarms on your phone or electronic devices to help you get into these routines.

Clean as you go. As your writing out your routine, plan in short cleaning activities that can be done in just a few minutes. For example, a simple daily bathroom wipe down with disinfectant wipes only take about a minute, but can eliminate germs while keeping your house fresh and tidy. Invite your little ones to help: 3 to 5 year olds can pick up their toys, 6 to 8 year olds can put clean dishes away, and 9 to 12 year olds can do their own bathroom cleaning.

Make a meal plan. Using a sheet of paper (or get fancy and purchase a weekly dry erase board for you refrigerator), and write down the meals you will make in the upcoming week. This will help you plan for what foods to pull from the freezer, eliminate last minute planning on busy evenings, and helps ensure your serving a balanced, nutritious meal each day.

Pull frozen proteins from the freezer. Nothing makes dinner time harder than having to work with frozen meats. So, when your making your meal plan, go ahead and pull frozen meats and other items from the freezer. Place them in a dish with a lip (think jelly roll pan) on the bottom shelf of the fridge to thaw. Now, they will be ready for you, when you are ready for them!

EASY DINNER IDEAS AND HOW TO PLAN THEM:

Making a dinner doesn't have to be anxiety-provoking. Here are a few dinner ideas that are nutritionally balanced. Included are steps for what you can do ahead of time to make these meals stress-free during busy weeks.

Chicken, Broccoli, & Rice Casserole served with a bowl of Pineapple, slice of Bread, and 4 oz of Apple Juice



Use canned chicken, instant rice, and frozen broccoli for a quicker cooking casserole. Cut fresh pineapple when you get home from the grocery so it's ready at any time, or open a can of pineapple canned in 100% fruit juice for a sweet side dish. Pull a loaf of bread out of the pantry, and pour a glass of water to drink. **While the casserole is in the oven, bathe children and prepare for the following day.**

Beef & Bean Chili, with shredded Cabbage, Grapefruit Wedges, Cornbread, and Water



Pull ground meat from the freezer early in the week (but no more than 7 days early for food safety reasons). Chop lettuce or cabbage ahead of time, or if it's in your food budget, purchase shredded cabbage slaw to use as a chili topping. Before beginning to brown meat, mix corn bread and place in the oven. While it is baking, prepare your chili. Cut fresh grapefruit or oranges and place in a bowl for a side of fruit. **Chili can also be prepared in a crockpot and cornbread prepared days ahead of time.**

CROCKPOT CHICKEN, & RICE CASSEROLE

By: Amy Halfmann, M.Ed, RDN, LD

Ingredients:

- 1 cup Rice
- 1 can Cream of Mushroom
- 1 can Water (rinse Cream of Mushroom can)
- 1 can Chicken Stock (rinse Cream of Mushroom can)
- 1 cup Broccoli, chopped (fresh or frozen)
- 1 cup Carrots, diced (fresh or frozen)
- 1 lb Chicken, diced
- 1 tsp Salt
- 1 tsp Black Pepper
- 2 tsp Onion Powder
- 2 tsp Garlic Powder
- 1 tsp Garlic Salt
- 4 oz Velveeta Cheese, cubed

Directions:

1. Add rice, cream of mushroom, water, chicken stock, broccoli, carrots, chicken, and seasonings to a crockpot. Stir together to combine.
2. Turn crockpot to low heat for 6 hours. Check it at hour 4 and 5, and add 1/2 cup of water if it appears dry.
3. After 6 hours, turn heat to "keep warm" until ready to serve. About 15 minutes before serving, add Velveeta cheese and stir; allow cheese to melt before serving.

Serve with crackers, fresh sliced fruit, and milk. Add a side salad for added nutrients.