

## Food for the Working Family

Is “eating on the run” a way of life for you and your family? Time for grocery shopping, food preparation and eating is frequently very limited for working families. More meals are eaten away from home than ever before.

Today’ busy lifestyles demand meals and foods that are speedy, convenient, and economical. Making sure that our food choices measure up nutritionally can sometimes be a big challenge, too.

### How Healthy is Your Diet?

If you’re trying to eat right so you’ll look and feel your best, and you’re watching what you feed your family, check out this nutrition quiz. The answers can be found on the reverse side.

1. To ensure proper nutrition, it’s important to eat three balanced meals a day. True or False?
2. Cottage cheese is one of the best sources of calcium. True or False?
3. What’s the best way to help your body absorb more iron from foods you eat?
4. Which of these foods contains the least amount of dietary fiber: oatmeal, peanuts, steak, radishes, or oranges?
5. If you’re a strict vegetarian, what vitamin will you probably be lacking?

### Eat Smart When Eating Out

Does fast food have to be fat food? Not if you make good choices at the fast food restaurant. What are some better choices?

- If you have a burger, skip the sauce, cheese, and other condiments.
- Choose low-fat milk or fruit juice instead of a soft drink or shake.
- Order a pizza by the slice instead of the pan. Topping no-nos are extra cheese, olives, sausage and pepperoni. Better picks: onions, peppers and mushrooms. Many pizza parlors feature salad bars. Choose from the variety of fresh vegetables, and avoid the high-fat dressings and salads swimming in dressing.
- Order a plain baked potato. Ask for low-fat yogurt on the side, or if you know it is not available, take along your own from home.
- Order a child’s portion for yourself. Smart fast food eating is not just a matter of what you eat. Eating slowly will help. The key is to savor your food, bite by bite.

## Time-Saving Strategies

Consider the options you have for trade-offs in the kitchen. Make every minute count for home food preparation.

- ▶ Delegate tasks - assign specific duties to others.
- ▶ Use low-cost convenience foods or make your own mixes.
- ▶ Try unattended cooking methods: slow-cooker, oven with a timer, timed outlet.
- ▶ Cook with the “quick” appliances: microwave oven, wok, pressure cooker, electric skillet.
- ▶ Prepare and freeze ahead meals, breads, and desserts.

## Lunches to Go

Brown bag lunches can be a wonderful treat if they’re planned with creativity and care. For a change of pace, mix or match some of the following ideas:

**Frozen fruit** - Pack frozen and it will thaw by lunchtime. Try strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, peaches, cherries, grapefruit sections, or pineapple tidbits.

**Soups** – Buy “no-salt added” or “reduced sodium” soups. Better yet, make soups at home, such as beef-potato soup, or vegetable soup. Carry the soup in a thermos if you don’t have a way to heat.

**Brown bag chef’s salad** - Save half the calories and fat of a typical chef’s salad bought in a restaurant. Choose carefully the combination of toppings: raw vegetables, kidney beans, low-fat, low-sodium cheese, chicken instead of ham.

**Cookies and crackers** - Choose lower fat cookies and crackers (Melba toast, fig bars, graham crackers, gingersnaps, unsalted pretzels)... or make your own cookies, quick breads, muffins, or cupcakes with less sugar and fat. Use whole-grain flours and add shredded vegetables or chopped dried fruit.

**School lunch** - Pack a school lunch assisted by your child. Let your child help with the grocery shopping as well as planning and preparing the bag lunch. Offer foods appropriate for the child’s age. Always include one of your child’s favorite foods even if it sometimes contains more sugar, sodium, or fat than you think is wise. Balance the meal with better choices at other meals during the day.

## Answers to Nutrition Quiz

- ▶ False. A balanced diet is what’s most important; small meals and snacks, or combinations of the two are fine.
- ▶ False. It’s only a moderately good source of calcium; however, it’s an excellent source of protein
- ▶ If you eat a vitamin C-rich food along with an iron containing food, you’ll absorb more of the iron.
- ▶ Steak. It’s an animal food and only plant foods contain fiber.
- ▶ Vitamin B12. It is available almost exclusively from animal foods.