

## meal planning tips

### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Meal planning can be one of the easiest ways to get healthier meals on the table. With the investment of a small amount of time up front, you can reap the rewards of better nutrition, less food waste, and more money in your wallet.

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#### Get Inspired

It's hard to sit down and create a meal plan without any ideas. Over the course of the week take a few moments to browse online for recipes, crack a few cookbooks or call a friend for that great recipe she prepared the last time you came over. Specifically seek out blogs or cookbooks dedicated to anti-inflammatory or RA-friendly recipes.

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#### Get Organized

Have a dedicated place where you store recipes, past meal plans and recipes you wish to try. It could be a spot in your home, in your phone, or on a website (ex: Pinterest). Having all of these items in one place makes meal planning much easier.

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#### Check Schedules

Look at the calendar to determine which nights may work best for more involved home-cooked dinners and which nights might be better for something a little quicker. Does someone have soccer practice, a late work meeting, or a dentist appointment? Take these items into consideration when creating your meal plan. Plan easier meals for later in the week when you may be more tired.

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#### Choose Themes

Creating a meal plan may be a lot less daunting if themes are assigned to different days of week. Themes could include soup, sandwiches, fish, pasta, meatless, slow cooker, poultry, breakfast for dinner, etc.

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#### Peek at the Weather

This may sound crazy but check the weather when creating your meal plan. If it's supposed to be unseasonably warm, plan to grill or choose foods that may taste better in warmer weather. On the flip side, if the mercury is dropping, choose foods that taste good in colder weather, like soups or heartier dishes.

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#### Plan for Leftovers

When making your meal plan, plan to have leftovers. They can be reheated for lunches or a quick dinner later in the week when you may be feeling more tired.

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#### Stock the Pantry

Meal planning can be easier if the pantry is stocked with necessities. There's nothing worse than starting to cook a meal and realizing you're out of a pantry staple! When a pantry item runs out, make sure to add it your grocery list! Check out the *Foods to Stock Your Pantry* handout as well.

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#### Be Flexible

No matter how well you plan, there are times when something unexpected may come up. Build some flexibility into your meal plan. Have a day that you know will be for leftovers or a "clean out the fridge" night. Having some built-in flexibility will cause less stress and less food waste!

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#### Shop the Sales

Check the weekly ads to determine if any of your favorite food products are on sale. Incorporate those items into your meal plan. Eating foods that are in season may also help to reduce costs as well.

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#### Keep a Meal Journal

Keep a record of the successful meals you've made. When you're tired or feeling at a loss for what to include in your meal plan, check out the items you've made in the past for some tried and true inspiration.

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#### Chop Wisely

If you often become sore while chopping foods, plan to prep foods on a different day so you're not in as much pain.

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