



GBS HEALTH & WELLNESS

# *Clinical Corner*

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You've probably heard the adage "failing to plan is planning to fail", and I can't think of a more appropriate application than meal planning.

Regardless of your personal nutrition habits, preferences, or health goals related to food, we all must eat to survive. And unless you are following an uncommon feeding schedule for one reason or another, the human body is primed for feeding about every 3-4 hours during waking hours. For most of us, that boils down to 3-5 meals and/or snacks each and every day. For a food lover like myself, how exciting! But I recognize that eating and certainly meal planning and preparation can feel daunting on many fronts. It takes time and money to eat, and there is no shortage of competing interests for these resources.

We're much more likely to choose a nutritionally diverse, higher quality selection of foods when we plan. And it makes sense - think of how easy it is to order takeout if you don't have an easy dinner prepped and ready, or how picking up a pastry with coffee on your way to work is a near-guarantee if you don't have a grab-n-go option waiting for you as you hurry out the door. Now, life happens, and convenience options can save the day, but they add up and are better used as a back-up to your plan. And as a bonus, your bank account will thank you.

To set yourself up for success, here's three tips to get started:

### 1. Write It Out

Take into account the next week's obligations and schedule constraints. What are the food preferences of those you are feeding? Are there any sales at your local grocery store? Don't forget to check your favorite recipe books or social media accounts for inspiration. Next, make a list of the following:

- › Number of meals and snacks you need for the week
- › Account for the foods you already have on hand
- › Name the actual meals (and snacks if it's helpful)
- › Make a grocery list

#### PRO TIP

Add a couple of extras to have on hand. You'll likely want something more or different than you initially listed. Having a variety of snacks can help bridge the gaps between meals or satisfy a sweet tooth.

### 2. Simple is Sustainable

Let's not overcomplicate our meal planning to the point that we dread it. Aim for dinners that take 30 minutes or less on weeknights and save your slow-cooker recipes or leftovers for evenings you anticipate being extra hectic. Same goes for breakfasts and lunches - there's nothing wrong with a sandwich, pre-cut veggies with dip and whole fruit for lunch!

### 3. Form the Habit

What can you incorporate into this ongoing task to make it stick? Consider adding grocery list prep to your weekend routine, let your kids pick a food to purchase and prepare, or incorporate a game-style way of choosing meals for the week.

#### BONUS TIP

Make in bulk! Consider dishes that can be enjoyed over multiple meals. This limits the time you spend preparing food, cleaning up, and frees precious time for other life happenings.

Lastly, keeping it fun and involving all the mouths you feed in the process will turn what can otherwise be a never-ending chore to a fun aspect of your routine.