

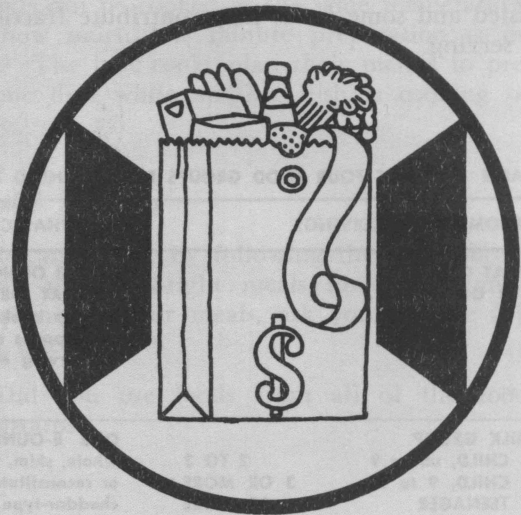
# FACT SHEET

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## PLANNING YOUR FAMILY MEALS

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Planning meals means knowing the kind and amount of food needed by each family member. Planning also means considering preferences, habits, season, income, storage and preparation facilities and the time and energy you have for meal preparation. Planning means thinking ahead!

### Food guide

The basic four food groups are a good place to begin in meeting your family's nutritional needs. Food and nutrition scientists have translated the nutrient needs of people and the nutritive values of food into an easy-to-use guide that includes many kinds of meals. To use this guide, give your family the number of servings suggested from each group daily, and then choose additional foods to round out meals and satisfy appetites. Although additional foods may not fall in the four food groups, they are important for variety, interest and meeting energy needs.

There is enough variety within a food group to account for individual food preferences and different food budgets. Some foods in each group are less expensive; others are more expensive.

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### Menu planning

After determining your family's daily food needs (see Table 1), you must consider when they will eat these foods. Mealtimes will probably follow a daily schedule. The kind of meal you eat also may remain fairly constant. For example, some families find that a large breakfast, light lunch and a main meal in the evening best fit their schedules. Other families find a light breakfast, large noon meal, light evening meal and a later snack best suit their situations. Because activities are often different on weekends and holidays, your family may have one meal pattern for weekdays and another pattern for weekends and holidays.

Any pattern that suits your family is good if it

- provides regular meals at regular intervals and
- includes a variety of foods from each of the four food groups.

Using a meal pattern helps insure the variety of foods needed for a good diet. Table 2 shows how a meal pattern becomes a menu and how the menu compares with the basic four food groups.

The estimated cost of the menu in Table 2 is \$4 (prices typical of Washington, D.C., June, 1970) for a family of four with two school children.



We all like variety and contrast, but we also want combinations that go together. Consider, for example, the old favorite of turkey and dressing with cranberry sauce. The turkey and dressing probably have a mild flavor, golden brown color, smooth moist texture and are served hot. The cranberry sauce is probably tart, bright red, mildly crunchy in texture and served ice cold. Contrasts represented by these two favorites work as complements to each other. Too many foods with strong flavors can make a meal as unappetizing as too few contrasts.

Check your menus for variety in

- color
- flavor
- texture
- shape
- temperature

### Limitations

Can you do it? Consider your limitations when planning family meals. How much time can you spend preparing food? What equipment do you have? What equipment can be used at the same time? An oven meal is a great idea only when all the foods can be cooked at the same temperature! Also, how much last minute preparation is involved? The best cooks plan their menus to prepare one dish while another dish is cooking or chilling.

### Successful planning

You can do it! By following the steps above, you can plan just-right meals for your family. After planning your meals, ask yourself the following questions.

- Did you use foods from all of the food groups?

TABLE 2. MENU FROM A MEAL PATTERN

Sample Meal Pattern	Sample Menu	Servings contributed by a day's menu				
		Meat	Milk <sup>1</sup>	Fruit-Vegetable	Bread-Cereal	Other
<b>BREAKFAST</b>						
Fruit or juice	Orange juice			1 (orange juice)		
Main dish <sup>2</sup> and/or cereal with milk	Oatmeal with milk		½ (milk)		1 (oatmeal)	
Bread	Cinnamon toast				1 (toast)	
Beverage	Non-fat dry milk or coffee		1 (milk)			(coffee)
<b>LUNCH</b>						
Main dish <sup>2</sup>	Hard cooked eggs or peanut butter and jelly sandwich	1 (egg or peanut butter)				(jelly)
Vegetable or fruit	Celery sticks, banana			½ (celery) 1 (banana)		
Bread	Bread (for sandwich)				1 (bread)	
Beverage	Milk (nonfat dry)		1 (milk)			
<b>SNACK</b>						
Fruit or cookies	Sugar cookies				½ (cookies)	
Beverage	Fruit or soft drink			1 (fruit drink)		(soft drink)
<b>DINNER</b>						
Main dish <sup>2</sup>	Fried chicken	1 (chicken)				
Vegetable	Mashed potatoes			1 (potato)		
Vegetable and/or salad	Carrot salad			1 (salad)		
Bread	Bread (enriched)				1 (bread)	
Dessert	Apple pie			½ (pie)		(pie)
Beverage	Milk or coffee		1 (milk)			(coffee)
<b>DAILY SCORE</b>		2 (meat)	3 ½ (milk)	6 (fruit-vegetable)	4 ½ (bread-cereal)	5 (other)
<b>Recommended Servings (adult)</b>		2 (meat)	2 (milk)	4 (fruit-vegetable)	4 (bread-cereal)	as desired

<sup>1</sup>Milk for everyone at least once daily and for children and teens more often. One serving of milk may come from the milk used with other foods such as cereal.

<sup>2</sup>Usually contains some meat, poultry, fish, egg, dry beans or peas, peanut butter or cheese. It also may contain other foods (noodles, rice, etc.).



- Do your meals have contrast in color, shape, texture, temperature and shape of the food?
- Does the meal fit your budget?
- Can you prepare the meal in the time you have?
- Do you have the necessary equipment?
- Did you avoid too many foods requiring last-minute preparation?

If you can answer "yes" to these six questions, you are on the way to good meals three times a day, 1,095 meals a year.

Tables adapted from *Your Money's Worth in Foods*, Consumer and Food Economics Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, USDA, Home and Garden Bulletin No. 183

Food Group	Food Item	Quantity	Notes
MILK GROUP	Whole milk	1 cup	
	Skim milk	1 cup	
EGG GROUP	Egg	1	
	Egg substitute	1/4 cup	
MEAT GROUP	Lean meat	2 oz	
	Poultry	2 oz	
VEGETABLE GROUP	Leafy green vegetable	1/2 cup	
	Starchy vegetable	1/2 cup	
FRUIT GROUP	Fruit	1/2 cup	
	Juice	1/2 cup	
BREAD-CEREAL GROUP	Bread	1 slice	
	Cereal	1/2 cup	
OTHER FOODS	Oil	1 tsp	
	Salt	1/4 tsp	

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