

# Meal planning creates most stress for working mums

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New Flinders research shows planning dinners creates more stress for working mums than cooking itself.

What's for dinner mum? A seemingly harmless question asked by millions of children every day is actually the most stressful part of food-related jobs for working mothers, new research from Flinders University shows.

Conducted by a team of Flinders researchers, the study found that planning what to cook for lunch and dinner causes [working mothers](#) more stress than any other aspect of family food and nutrition – including cooking itself.

The study explored the ways in which 21 working mothers in casual, part-time and full-time jobs perceived and managed food-related jobs for their families, with a focus on food and time practices in meeting nutritional recommendations.

Of the findings, Nutrition and Dietetics research assistant Rachel Roberts said the most recurrent message from mothers was the stress associated with planning lunch and dinner.

"Once it came to cooking, most [women](#) could whip something up but the actual thinking 'what on earth am I going to make for dinner tonight' was the most [stressful task](#) out of all their food-related activities," Ms Roberts, who conducted the study, said.

"This was particularly the case for mothers who were working and studying at the same time," she said.

"In those instances, study was described as "taking up head space" that meant thinking of what to cook was more difficult."

Ms Roberts said responses to managing family food and nutrition guidelines varied, with some women saying the [Australian Guide to Healthy Eating](#) was achievable for their family, while others thought they would need to give up work to meet the guidelines.

"There was a group of women who felt very confident that they were eating a healthy diet already and didn't need to make any changes to their family's diet, and there was another group of women who felt it was near

impossible to meet nutritional guidelines in Australia.

"Those women felt they didn't have the time and would have to give up things like work or study to achieve those guidelines."

Ms Roberts said initial findings highlighted the need for more awareness among health practitioners on the practicality of [healthy eating](#) guidelines for working [mothers](#).

Provided by Flinders University

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