

The benefits of a weekly diet plan

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(HealthDay)—Day-to-day diet planning can be a hassle and fall by the wayside if you get into a time crunch. To keep weight-loss efforts on track, take a few minutes every weekend to get organized for the

following week.

One smart way to plan daily menus is to first look at the upcoming seven days of meals and snacks as a whole and then divide up the week's worth of portions from each of the key [food](#) groups. You might get more whole grains on Monday and more fruit on Wednesday, but it should all balance out over the course of the week.

Now commit it to paper or an app. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has a free service called SuperTracker that lets you put all this information online through your computer or laptop. You can use it to plan every aspect of weight loss, including the amount of weight you'd like to lose and how many calories to eat in a day.

Under the "Food Tracker" tab at SuperTracker (www.supertracker.usda.gov/foodtracker.aspx), you can enter foods by meal, and the program will tally up the calories for you. The "Daily Food Group Targets" chart lets you know what food groups your menus are lacking or have in excess.

Once you have your weekly plan in place, you can make an exact grocery store list and go food shopping without being distracted. You don't have to buy all your groceries at once if you like to shop more than once a week, but use your master list every time you go.

Always try to shop at least 1 to 2 days ahead of your needs so you won't have to resort to [fast food](#) because you couldn't get to the market in time on a particular day.

More information: Explore all aspects of diet and meal planning through [SuperTracker](#) from the USDA.

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