

## 7 tips for eating healthy at home

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For some people, being told to stay home all day can disrupt meal routines and add to the challenge of heart-healthy eating. But that challenge can be an opportunity.

Problems can arise when everyone spends their days steps away from

overstuffed refrigerators, said Esther Granville, who manages nutrition programs for Healthy Duke, an employee wellness program at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

"But I think equally what we're finding is that people are now having more opportunities than they have ever had to actually focus on how to prepare [healthy food](#) at home."

Granville, a registered dietitian who has been leading online classes about eating well at home, has some tips for doing just that.

## **Plan your shopping**

Come up with a basic schedule for what you'll make. You can limit waste—and save money—by checking what might be nearing the end of its shelf life and thinking of ways to use it. Could you use last night's leftover marinara sauce in another recipe? Is there something in the freezer that's going to get freezer burn if you don't thaw it out? You can find sample menus to help you plan at [Choosemyplate.gov](http://Choosemyplate.gov).

## **Be flexible, but don't overbuy**

These days, everyone needs to be prepared for the possibility the store might be out of some items. But buying more than you need raises the likelihood of having [food waste](#). "If you go overboard, you may be wasting your money," Granville said.

Two weeks' worth of food per trip is a good target, she said. If you're shopping in person, remember your mask and hand sanitizer, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## **Consider delivery**

The world of online grocery shopping is rapidly expanding. Granville noted some people might be wary because of the fear of added expenses. Some stores tell you upfront that their online prices will not match what can be found at the store's brick-and-mortar location.

Even if that's the case where you shop, there may be benefits to shopping online. Some stores show you a running total of how much you're spending. If you find yourself going over budget, you can make an adjustment.

"That's much more difficult to do when you're in the store, trying to sort of add that up in your head as you go," Granville said. You also might be less tempted to take a stroll down the candy aisle by shopping online. You also may be less distracted by point-of-sale advertising for things you don't need.

## **Understand what makes a balanced meal**

The basic ideas can be found at [ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov). The American Heart Association recommends eating an overall healthy dietary pattern that emphasizes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean vegetable or animal protein, fish, nuts and legumes, and non-tropical vegetable oils. It also should limit saturated and trans fats, sodium, red and processed meats, added sugars and sweetened beverages.

## **Avoid processed foods**

You might be tempted to stock up on ready-to-eat meals, but check the label. If you don't recognize most of the ingredients, put it back, Granville said. You can still find shelf-stable items that are healthy: Think canned and frozen fruits and vegetables. Choose those canned in water without added sugar, sodium or saturated and [trans fats](#) when

possible. And, rinse them before using.

"I really think of both of those items as being pantry staples because they allow you to round out a meal that maybe was missing that element," she said.

Adapting your tastes to healthier options can help, she noted. For example, if you're buying pasta, look for whole-grain versions.

## **Have healthy snacks on hand**

One of the best things to do is to keep healthy foods available and out in the open.

"There has been plenty of research that actually shows if you take a bowl of fresh fruit, and you stick it in the fridge behind the milk carton, you are much less likely to walk by and grab an apple out of that bowl than you would be if that bowl was sitting out on the kitchen counter," Granville said.

## **Not a cook? Not a problem**

Just because all your friends are suddenly baking their own bread from scratch doesn't mean you have to. Adjust your cooking plans to your skill level.

"It definitely doesn't need to be that complicated," Granville said. She recommends starting with a list of five or six healthy meals that you know how to prepare. Then, as time and your creative desires allow, start branching off.

"Find what works for you," she said. "If you understand the simple

concept of a balanced plate, where you are consuming different foods in moderation and in balance, it's really all that's required to eat healthy."

**More information:** The American Society for Nutrition offers additional suggestions at [nutrition.org](https://www.nutrition.org).

Provided by American Heart Association

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