



Countdown to Health



Healthy "Fast Food" for Busy Families

We know we should be eating more fruits and vegetables and less processed and packaged foods, but our fast-paced lifestyles make it difficult to find time to prepare healthy foods. Between working and taking your kids to school, soccer practice, guitar lessons, etc., it often leaves no time for a home cooked meal with the family. However, it's important to remember how vital wholesome, nutritious food is for our kids so they can keep energized throughout their busy schedules.

Stocking up

Filling your refrigerator with an abundance of produce is the easiest way to provide quick and healthy options.

Stray from processed food – your body and mind will thank you later. When purchasing ingredients for your homemade meals, don't forget the staple items such as milk, eggs and bread. Buy bulk nuts and seeds, toast them in the oven with your favorite seasonings and store in glass jars. When in a pinch, grab a handful of these fat and protein-packed snacks.

Elizabeth Blessing is co-founder and chief nutritionist for Green B.E.A.N. Delivery, a company that delivers organic produce and natural groceries to Indianapolis and surrounding area homes.

Prep ahead

Wash, dry and chop an assortment of colorful vegetables for snacking, tossing into salads or cooking. Peel and cut cucumbers, cut away broccoli florets, grate carrots or beets that can be added to salads.

- Cut up strawberries, a whole pineapple or peel an assortment of citrus fruit so it can be grabbed quickly as a snack or incorporated into a meal.
- Involve your kids! Let them help measure, peel or cut (depending on age). They will likely enjoy these healthy meals more if they have contributed to the pot.

Double up

Bake, broil, steam, poach, sauté, roast or grill meat, poultry or fish to feed twice the members of your family. Reheating leftovers from last night's dinner is a great way to incorporate quick, healthy foods into tomorrow's lunch. The same goes for vegetables.

- Prep items for the week such as a big batch of rice, quinoa or beans.
- Make a big pot of soup and store in glass containers that fit your family's needs. A pint glass for an individual serving at lunch or a quart jar for a family dinner.
- Hard boil eggs by the dozen. Grab a couple for breakfast as you run out the door, or chop them up and add to your salad at lunch.
- Make a big batch of your favorite healthy pancakes or muffins, pop them in the toaster oven, add your favorite toppings and quickly get your day started the right way.

Inspired by fall? This dish will warm your family right up:

Butternut Squash Soup Serves 4-6

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Rinse and dry the outside of the butternut squash. Taking the tip of a knife, poke tiny holes over the entire surface of the squash. Place in a roasting dish and bake for an hour, a knife should easily insert all the way through the squash. Remove and let cool. Cut butternut in half lengthwise and scoop out seeds. Scoop the butternut squash flesh into a mixing bowl and set aside.

In a large soup pot, heat butter over medium heat. Add onions, garlic, and a pinch of salt and sauté until onion is translucent, 5 minutes. Stir in the nutmeg, cinnamon, and sage; coat onion mixture with spices. Add the butternut squash, chicken stock, 1 teaspoon of salt, a couple turns of fresh black pepper and bring to a boil; reduce to a simmer, cover with a lid, and cook for 30 minutes. Turn off heat and puree in a blender or using an immersion blender. Stir in coconut milk, adjust seasonings, and serve.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 butternut squash
- 2 tablespoons clarified butter, ghee, or butter
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Salt
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 3 sage leaves, minced
- 4 cups chicken stock
- Black pepper
- 1/4 cup coconut milk



For more recipe ideas and advice, check out our [Healthy Times Blog](#).