

SUPPERTIME SURVIVAL



Managing the Suppertime Mealtime Crunch

- **Make a plan.** Making a plan can be as simple as taking items out of the freezer the night before and placing them in the fridge to defrost overnight. When you are on your way home from work or picking your kids up from school at least you have a starting point for your meal.
- **Make ONE supper meal that the whole family can enjoy and avoid becoming a short order cook.** There is nothing more frustrating than being in the kitchen catering to everyone's likes and dislikes. Serve meals that you know are acceptable, but be sure to include a variety of different meals over the week that will appeal to the majority.
- **Serve part of supper before supper.** The after-school crowd is usually starving when they get home from school. A plate of cut up fruit and/or vegetables will disappear quickly when kids are hungry. Preschoolers can munch on raw veggies while supper is being made. This keeps them occupied and tops up those nutrient-packed vegetable servings for the day!
- **Keep a well-stocked pantry.** This is a key strategy to surviving the daily meal time madness. Try to limit grocery shopping to ONCE per week. You will be amazed at how much time you can save if you can avoid dashing into the grocery store on the way home from work! With a well stocked pantry you can always pull together a meal in a hurry.
- **Purchase some prepared and pre-packaged foods to save time.** Cooked deli chickens can be a lifesaver at suppertime. Combined with frozen vegetables they can be the starting point for a quick chicken stir-fry or chicken pot pie. Combined with peppers, onions and pantry spices you can make kid-pleasing chicken fajitas. Extra chicken can always be used in lunches the next day as part of a sandwich or salad. One deli chicken yields about 3 cups/750 ml of shredded or diced chicken. Leftovers should be used within 3 days or frozen for later use.
- **Cook once and eat twice!** If you are making a lasagna or a casserole or a stew or a pasta sauce, **always** make enough for at least 2 meals. Store extras in the refrigerator for up to 3 days or freeze and use within 3 months. Extra meals in the freezer are like money in the bank!
- **Keep mealtime interesting by trying a new recipe every couple of weeks.** Ask your family to help with ideas or come up with new recipes. It is amazing what new foods the kids will try if they have been part of the meal planning process.
- **Get the kids involved in meal preparation.** Learning how to prepare and cook healthy, tasty and nutritious meals is an important **life skill**. Determine age appropriate involvement in the meal preparation and let them help you out. It will be fun for them and give you a chance to get caught up on the news of the day!
- **Try to eat together as a family as often as possible.** Studies have shown that families that eat together...eat better!
- **Be a good role model for healthy eating.** Taste preferences and eating habits start to form early in life and are strongly influenced by family members and peers. It is important for parents to serve as good role models for healthy eating and to make healthy choices available.