What Can I Make When I Am Short on Time?

No time to prepare a healthy meal? Check out these strategies:

**Keep your pantry and freezer stocked.** For example, stock whole-grain pasta, brown rice, lentils, bulgur, whole-wheat couscous, canned beans, diced tomatoes, frozen lean meats, and canned/frozen fruits and vegetables. With a few staples, you can whip up a healthy meal in no time.

**Consider healthy convenience items.** For example, shredded reduced-fat cheese, pre-cut stir-fry vegetables, shredded cabbage, skinless chicken strips, mixed salad greens, pre-washed spinach, and chopped onion. Even thinly sliced lean deli meat is quick for stir-fried recipes.

**Serve assemble-your-own menus.** Try deli sandwiches or mini-pizzas on English muffins. Set out various ingredients for a salad, baked potato, or taco bar.

**Invest wisely in time-saving kitchen tools.** Consider food choppers, flexible cutting boards, food processors, nuts and spice grinders, kitchen gadgets, slow cookers, microwaves, or convection ovens. A few smart pieces can save time and money.

**Keep it simple.** You don’t need a recipe to prepare a healthy meal. Prepare a side of whole-grain pasta or brown rice. Sauté a piece of chicken, fish or tofu. Add your favorite vegetables sautéed in a small amount of olive oil.

**Plan ahead.** Spend a few minutes each weekend planning your meals for the week. Choose chicken, fish, and several vegetarian meals. Take your list to the grocery store when you shop.

**Take advantage of down time.** If you have an extra hour on the weekends or at night, simmer a pot of brown rice or dried beans. Drain, cool, and store in the refrigerator or freezer.

**Double up.** When you find time to cook, double or triple the recipe and freeze half for later. Both soups and one-dish meals freeze well. Be sure to label and date your containers. When you need a quick dinner, just reheat and enjoy!
What Can I Make When I Am Short on Time? (continued)

Put your slow-cooker to work. Simmer soups, casseroles, lasagna, or one-pot meals while you are away during the day. Spend a few minutes in the morning preparing the meal and come home to a piping hot dinner!

Quick & Healthy Meal Ideas

**Tex-Mex Baked Potato.** Cook a potato in microwave until tender. Top with reduced-fat cheddar, black beans, salsa, and reduced-fat sour cream. Serve with a side of steamed broccoli.

**Soup & Salad.** Heat a can of lower-fat, lower-sodium soup such as Campbell’s Healthy Request or Healthy Choice. Serve with a green salad topped with your favorite vegetables and light dressing.

**Mini-Pizza.** Top a whole-grain English Muffin, pita, bagel, or tortilla with lower-sodium tomato sauce, reduced-fat cheese, and vegetables. Heat in the oven or toaster oven.

**Grilled Chicken Salad.** Sauté lean chicken, fish, or tofu in a skillet with a small amount of olive oil. Meanwhile, prepare a green salad with your favorite vegetables and light dressing. Top with chicken.

**Pasta Primavera.** Simmer lower-sodium spaghetti sauce with fresh chopped spinach, mushrooms, shredded carrot, bell peppers, peas, and/or cooked beans. Toss with whole-grain pasta and top with a small amount of Parmesan.

**Crock-pot Vegetarian Chili.** Combine cooked black, kidney, navy, and/or pinto beans with canned diced tomatoes, onions, and peppers. Add your favorite seasonings such as chili powder, cumin, and oregano. Simmer over medium-low heat until vegetables are tender, about 5-6 hours.

**Broccoli Almond Stir-Fry.** Prepare brown rice. Sauté chicken, fish, or tofu; set aside and keep warm. In a small amount of oil, sauté fresh or frozen stir-fry vegetables. Combine meat and vegetables with a small amount of reduced-sodium soy or teriyaki sauce. Serve over rice. Top with toasted slivered almonds.