why plan meals?

If you are a busy person like me, you simply can't afford not to plan meals. A little culinary forethought each week can save you time and money and benefit your health and waistline.

While you may not end up planning 365 dinners each year, you will be way ahead with your food choices and enjoy more energy. It works for me!

3 reasons to give it a go

1. Time savings—You will spend less time thinking about "What's for dinner?" You will require fewer trips to the supermarket. Your shopping experience will be more productive.

2. Dollar savings—You will have less food wastage and rely less on frozen convenience meals, which are usually more expensive.

3. Health savings—You will be less likely to give in to carryout on the way home, preventing compromise of your health goals. Depending on choice, just one carryout meal deal can easily provide more than half the calories a person needs for the entire day!

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7 tips to help you plan

1. Buy some good cookbooks or surf the Web for recipe inspiration.

2. Design a 7-day menu plan to suit your week and personal needs.

3. Choose your cooking nights—be realistic.

4. Go grocery shopping in advance.

5. Prepare more one-pot meals—you can cook in bulk and there is less cleaning up.

6. Use your leftovers wisely—refrigerate for tomorrow's dinner or immediately freeze in single portion containers you can take to work for lunches.

7. Share cooking nights with your family or friends.

Use these seven ideas to enhance your home life, and improve your physical and emotional health.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See the latest at http://www.sueradd.com.