



## Planning Ahead. Staying Ahead.

Carpenters have a saying: measure twice and cut once. The point is that planning before we act, as opposed to making things up as we go along, is the wise course of action. In the carpenter's case, the consequence of not planning would be doing something twice that should have only needed doing once.

In the case of one who is looking to lose weight and be healthier, the consequence of not planning ahead can be even more problematic, including repeated situations where healthy dietary habits are compromised.

A healthful lifestyle doesn't just happen. It needs to be created. It needs to be planned--measured twice, as it were. All healthy lifestyles require the same basic ingredients: healthful meals, snacks, and beverages, coupled with regular aerobic and resistance training exercise, and down time to relax and reduce stress. Investing a little time and energy into planning for these ingredients pays off in many beneficial ways. Let's consider some of them.

To start, planning establishes goals. And goals are essential to good health. Without a plan you say things like, "I'm going to start exercising someday." That's not a real goal. With a plan you say, "I'm going to go to the gym 3 days a week, and do 30 minutes of cardio followed by 30 minutes of weight training." That's a goal.

Planning also brings with it the benefit of saving time. Taking your gym clothes with you to work so that you can stop at the gym on the way is a great time-saver. Purchasing all of the snacks you will need for the week means no standing in cafeteria lines, or worse yet, making trips to the vending machine. Making your lunch the night before can free up time to spend your lunch break walking with a co-worker rather than scurrying out for fast food. Plus, you have the option of finishing your lunch at your desk. Dinners are easy when you plan ahead and purchase the foods you need. Just defrost the meat and you're ready to prepare a quick meal when you arrive home. You may even be able to talk your spouse or older child into getting the meal started while you hit the gym on the way home. These ideas sure beat standing in front of the refrigerator wondering why there isn't anything worth eating in there, don't you agree?

And who doesn't like saving money? Planners save a lot of it. Scan through the local grocery sales flyer for sale items. Use it to plan your meals and snacks for the week (you may want to stock up on frequently-used sales items.). Make sure to include meals and snacks to be eaten away from home, too. This will help eliminate any temptation for fast food and vending machine items. Don't

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forget your beverages. Buying bottled water (or other beverages) from the grocery store on sale can save you a whopping 80-90%.

Planning ahead may even help your mental disposition. It can make you feel more in control, better balanced, and less stressed. Because it helps you achieve your health goals, it can enhance your sense of accomplishment and give a boost to your self-confidence.

Hopefully you've been sold on the benefits of planning ahead to achieve a healthful lifestyle. How do you get started? You already have. Use the insights discussed in this article, as well as applying the tips and suggestions that follow. That should give you a well-rounded idea of your optimum health goals. And then, like that carpenter we mentioned at the beginning might say, build on it.

## Nutrition

- Overall goals may include meeting your body's nutritional needs on a daily basis. You can then break this down to meeting protein goals, taking vitamin and mineral supplements, eating six small meals and snacks, drinking adequate fluids, limiting high-fat foods, avoiding foods and drinks with more than 2 grams of added sugars, and maybe setting a calorie goal. Use the Barix Clinics' Nutrition Guide for the recommended number of servings from each food group.
- Based upon these goals, plan your meals and snacks for the week. You can make minor modifications each week when the situation calls for it.
- Make a shopping list based upon your weekly meal plan.
- Put together your snacks, beverages and lunch the night before. In the morning just grab and go.

## Regular Physical Activity

- Your overall goals for regular physical activity should include 20 minutes or more of aerobic exercise 3-5 times each week, and flexibility and resistance training 2-3 times each week. Consider how you can best meet these goals based upon your unique situation. You may choose to purchase a pedometer and set a weekly walking goal. You may hire a personal trainer. At work, you may use weights and walk during your lunch.
- Remember: Bring the body and the mind will follow. The hardest part may be getting to where you are going to exercise; but once you are there, the positive payoff after a good workout makes you feel great.

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