

CHECKLIST

# Smart Weekly Meal Preparation





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**T**his checklist helps you implement the three-component meal formula (protein, healthy carbs, good fats) to create nutritious meals in 15 minutes or less, saving you time while maintaining a healthy diet.

## 1. Planning Phase

- Identify 5-7 proteins to rotate through your weekly meals**  
These form the foundation of satisfying meals and keep you full longer. Examples include eggs, chicken, fish, beans, or Greek yogurt.
- Select 5-7 healthy carbohydrate options**  
These provide energy for your busy days. Focus on whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, oats, sweet potatoes, or whole grain bread.

- ❑ **Choose 3-5 healthy fat sources**  
Good fats help your brain function and keep you satisfied. Options include avocado, nuts, olive oil, or cheese.
- ❑ **Create your shopping list organized by store sections**  
Grouping similar items together makes shopping faster and prevents forgotten ingredients that force return trips.

## 2. Smart Shopping Strategies

- ❑ **Shop the outer edges of the store first**  
This is where you'll find fresh produce, dairy, and proteins. The middle aisles contain more processed foods that often take longer to prepare.
- ❑ **Purchase versatile ingredients that work in multiple dishes**  
Items like canned beans can become salad toppings, soup bases, or taco fillings - increasing your meal flexibility.
- ❑ **Stock up on frozen vegetables**  
These cook quickly, never go bad, and contain the same nutrients as fresh vegetables, making them perfect for 15-minute meals.
- ❑ **Buy emergency meal ingredients**  
Keep staples for ultra-quick meals always available, such as eggs, canned beans, Greek yogurt, tuna, pasta, and frozen fruits.

## 3. Batch Preparation

- ❑ **Cook a large batch of grains or starches**  
Prepare rice, quinoa, or pasta in bulk. It takes the same time as cooking small amounts but provides ready carbs for 5+ days.

- ❑ **Roast a sheet pan of mixed vegetables**  
Do this while your grains cook to maximize efficiency. These become the base for quick meals all week.
- ❑ **Prep proteins in batches**  
Grill several chicken breasts, hard boil a dozen eggs, or cook ground turkey with basic seasonings to use throughout the week.
- ❑ **Portion ingredients into meal-sized containers**  
This makes assembly even faster during busy weekdays when time is limited.

#### 4. Meal Assembly

- ❑ **Use the palm method for portioning**  
A palm-sized portion of protein, a cupped handful of carbs, and a thumb-sized portion of fats provides balanced nutrition without measuring.
- ❑ **Alternatively, use the plate method**  
Fill half your plate with vegetables, one-quarter with protein, and one-quarter with healthy carbs. Add a small amount of healthy fats.
- ❑ **Create at least 3 "formula meals" you can make without recipes**  
Having go-to combinations eliminates decision fatigue and makes healthy eating automatic.
- ❑ **Establish 2-3 emergency meal strategies**  
For days when you're too tired to cook, have ultra-quick options ready that still follow the three-component formula.

## 5. Sustainability Practices

- Schedule a weekly 30-minute batch cooking session**  
Consistency with meal prep makes healthy eating possible even during your busiest weeks.
- Track your favorite meal combinations**  
Keep notes on what works well so you can repeat successful meals without extra planning.
- Evaluate your system monthly and adjust as needed**  
What's working? What needs improvement? Small tweaks keep your meal system effective for your changing schedule.