



Meal Prepping

Weekend meal prepping might feel arduous at first, but if you stick with it, in time it will become part of your routine – just like brushing your teeth. Nutritionist and naturopath Belinda Kirkpatrick, author of *Healthy Hormones*, offers tips to get you started.

Meal prepping is important for a variety of reasons. Firstly, when Monday morning rolls around, it feels great to know breakfast and lunch are sorted. Plus, portion control is something a lot of people struggle with and meal prepping really helps with this. Finally, it's a great way to save money, as nothing in the fridge goes to waste.

I have a basic philosophy that everything lasts three days in the fridge, so I tend to prep on Sundays and Wednesdays. This also helps me avoid having to spend too long prepping each time. Here's what I do, to help you cope with your Sunday.

Step 1. Get organised

The trick to meal prep is to be organised and as streamlined as possible. After a few 'practice Sundays, you'll get the hang of it and be so efficient you'll be prepping as you make Sunday dinner, making the most of

your time, and minimising your washing up.

Part of being organised means having the right utensils on hand. Invest in a good knife and chopping board and stock up on leak-proof screw top containers. It's hard to find small and cheap jars so I use baby food jars. They're economical and good for the environment.

Step 2: Start with breakfast

I have two go-to breakfast recipes that are delicious, healthy and easy to reach for in the morning rush. First, yoghurt pots. I mix natural yoghurt with a couple of tablespoons of chia seeds and LSA in little tubs and top them with frozen raspberries. My second go-to breakfast is egg wraps. Simply put a couple of boiled eggs in a wrap with some spinach and a spicy relish. Then wrap it in baking paper so it's ready to toast in a sandwich press at work or home.

Step 3: Move onto snacks

Snacks are important to prepare because healthy snacks are hard to find. The quickest way to derail your healthy eating is to become so ravenous you're forced to grab a convenient muffin or chocolate bar just to tide you over. Choose between two to three of these options and you'll always have something nutritious to reach for: boiled eggs; nuts/seeds; chia puddings; apple with almond hummus spread with carrot, celery or cucumber sticks; miso soup; bliss balls; healthy banana bread; or cheese and cucumber. You might think it's okay to just take the bag of nuts and tub of hummus, but I find it's a good idea to portion out everything, otherwise – if you're anything like me – it's too easy to scoff the lot and wind up feeling sick and bloated. The veggie sticks are not quite as fresh on Wednesday as they were on Monday, but I don't have time to cut them up daily, so I go with it.

Step 4: Now for lunches...

Generally, I double dinner and pop a portion in a container for lunch the following day. Start to think of extra dinner not as leftovers, but as an extra portion you're making. I like this because it means I only have to think about what I'm having for dinner. Often I'll also make a big batch of quinoa salad (see the recipe - <http://belindakirkpatrick.com.au/chicken-and-quinoa-salad/>) for the first three days of the week and add some extra protein from dinner to it each day. This salad is great because quinoa is a gluten-free seed that acts like grain, is rich in protein and contains lots of fibre, which helps you feel full for longer. It's also really high in iron and zinc, which help to keep the immune system strong.





Step 5: Dinner.

I usually try and have a meal plan for what I am cooking for dinner for the next three days because half the battle is deciding what you are going to cook. Once I know what I'm having, I make sure I have the ingredients in the fridge and pantry. I usually keep it pretty simple for the beginning of the week, with salmon, chicken skewers or lamb cutlets, served with steamed vegetables, such as broccoli, beans, carrots and cauliflower, and roast sweet potato. When you get home, chop the sweet potato and while it bakes in the oven, cook the meat and steam the veggies. If you are time poor, cut up your veggies in advance and store them in an air-tight container in the fridge. These vegetables are great for helping to remove excess oestrogen in the body and can help balance hormones and support healthy liver function – you should be aiming to include at least five different types of vegetable in your diet every day.

Step 6: Don't forget the extras

Finally, throw a few nice herbal tea bags in your lunch bag at the beginning of the week. My personal favourites are liquorice, which is great for helping to combat stress and support the adrenal glands; nettle leaf, which reduces fluid retention and helps keep your skin looking clear and fresh; and rooibos, which is a great caffeine-free alternative to black tea and is comforting mid-morning with a splash of milk.



Belinda Kirkpatrick is an expert nutritionist and naturopath with over 12 years' clinical experience. Besides running a busy clinic in Sydney, Australia, Belinda lectures in nutrition and naturopathy and is a regular television and media presenter on health and dietary topics. This year, Belinda published her first book, *Healthy Hormones*, with Ainsley Johnstone, which features expert naturopathic advice, 50 recipes and tips on lifestyle and nutrition. It is available for purchase at all good bookstores or on Amazon.