

# Healthy Meal Exchange Group

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## Here's the quick version for starting your own Healthy Meal Exchange Group:

1. Invite health-minded friends to join a group of 3 or 4 people for a monthly healthy meal exchange.
2. Pick a date to swap meals.
3. Select a homemade, tasty, and healthy meal to batch cook.
4. Use the [Healthy Plate Model](#) to balance your meal.
5. Follow safe and clean food handling practices.
6. Batch cook 16 portions (4-person group) or 15 portions (3-person group).
7. Pick matching food containers. Re-useable glass containers are best.
8. Label your meals with the recipe name and date prepared.
9. Transport your food safely in a cooler.
10. Swap your healthy meals with your group and enjoy!



# Healthy Meal Exchange Rules

1. **Find Health-Minded Friends:** Arrange yourself into a group of 4 (ideal) or group of 3, with similar interests in healthy eating. Limit food restrictions to no more than one request per group (e.g. gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, not spicy, etc.).
  - a. **Groups of 4:** You will be batch cooking 16 portions of a single healthy meal, for a 4-4-4-4 exchange.
  - b. **Groups of 3:** You will be batch cooking 15 portions of a single healthy meal, for a 5-5-5 exchange.
2. **Food Exchange Date:** Select a date, time, and location where your Healthy Meal Exchange group will meet up for a food swap. Ideally arrange to meet up 1x/month, but you can exchange food more or less frequently to suit your schedule.
3. **Food Quality:** All meals should be homemade with real, wholesome food. Bring your “A game”, or at least try your best to select a meal that is healthy, and is also flavourful, nourishing, and delicious to eat.
4. **Balanced Meals:** Your meal should include some lean protein, some form of unprocessed high quality carbohydrate (e.g. brown rice, quinoa, sweet potato, squash, wild rice, etc.) and where appropriate, freezer-stable vegetables snuck into your recipe. When eating your meal, try following the [Healthy Plate Model](#) with ½ a plate of veggies, ¼ plate of lean protein, and ¼ plate of high quality carbohydrates, adding a salad or extra veggies to the side of your reheated healthy meal whenever possible for extra goodness.
5. **Cleanliness:** Cook with safe and clean food handling practices, washing your hands and the ingredients appropriately, and avoiding cross-contamination of food allergens.
6. **Quantity:** Batch cook enough food to fill all of your single-serving containers (16 portions in total if in a 4-person group, 15 portions in total if in a 3-person group).
7. **Storage Containers:** Container selection should be agreed upon by the group members in advance so everyone uses the same serving size.
  - a. **Short-Term:** If doing a one-time exchange, rectangular (recyclable) take-out containers are acceptable ([example 1](#), [example 2](#), [example 3](#)). Try to avoid reheating your meal in a plastic container, if possible.
  - b. **Long-Term:** If this is going to be a long-term commitment, as a group, invest in reusable glass containers that are oven, microwave, and dishwasher safe to save the environmental from unnecessary waste and reduce costs. Our Healthy Meal Exchange group went with [3 cup Pyrex](#) rectangular glass containers (64 containers in total, 16 per person, ordered online).

8. **Labelling:** Once your Healthy Meal is batch cooked and portioned out, label your containers with the recipe name and date it was prepared on. Masking tape or blank envelope labels work well.
9. **Transportation of Food:** Bring a cooler or insulated freezer bag to transport your meals to and from your meeting spot.
10. **Swap:** Exchange your Healthy Meals with your friends, and enjoy a variety of nutritious options that are quick and easy to reheat on busy days. At your swap, feel free to bring a photocopy of your recipe to share with each group member.
  - a. **Groups of 4:** Each person will keep 4 containers from each of the 4 recipes prepared (16 meals in total per person).
  - b. **Groups of 3:** Each person will keep 5 containers from each of the 3 recipes prepared (15 meals in total per person).



*Enjoy!*

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