



# COOK AT HOME

Many of us eat outside the home on a regular basis. *The “convenience” of eating out frequently takes a toll on our health as well as our wallets.* Cooking at home can be family building, money saving and healthier too!

## The Facts:

- According to the American Dietetic Association, people consume 50% more calories, fat and sodium when they eat out than when they cook at home.
- Kids who eat with their family at home are more active, watch less television, were less likely to use alcohol, drugs or cigarettes, and tend to get better grades.
- 96 percent of America’s chain restaurant entrees fell outside the range of the USDA’s recommendations for fat, saturated fat and sodium per meal.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Preventions found that 11 percent of US adults get their calories from fast foods. Young black adults got 15 percent compared to 11 percents for whites and Hispanics.
- In the greater Fredericksburg area, there are 1.68 fast food restaurants for every 1000 persons. The Healthy People 20/20 goal is to have less than 0.57.

## THE BASICS OF COOKING AT HOME

1. **Be organized.** Being organized is the best strategy to make cooking at home easy and enjoyable. See our Step 4 “Get Organized” for more ideas on getting organized.
2. **Short-cuts are OK.** Frozen or pre-cut fruits and vegetables can save time. Ready-made sauces are also helpful - just pay attention to labels and be sure you are minimizing added salt, sugar, fats and artificial ingredients. Rotisserie roasted chickens are widely available and reasonably priced.
3. **Aim for 3.** When starting out, aim for cooking at home three nights a week. Your family may find itself “cooking in” even more with time.
4. **Cook once, eat twice.** Double recipes that can be frozen, or have two uses. Make a large batch of ratatouille. Use it once with whole grain pasta and again later in the week paired with fish. Grill extra chicken breasts for salads or cold sandwiches.
5. **Reclaim prime time.** Establish a family routine for preparing dinner at home *together*. Involving the whole family in cooking can make for quality time and can get that healthy meal on the table faster.
6. **Plan and portion when eating out.** When possible, look at menus online to make better choices. Spur of the moment temptations can often derail good intentions - being prepared helps. **Portion** - ask for a “to-go” container as soon as your meal is served and take half home to eat the next day.

*\*We define cooking at home as using fresh ingredients, not microwaving a frozen dinner. So, as you are chopping, stirring, and plating - remember that you are saving money, cutting calories and spending quality time with your family.*

