



Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black | plant-based nutrition for the whole family

Episode 2 of Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black

Save Time, Maintain a Healthy Diet

When I talk to families in the office about healthy eating, one of the most common things I hear from parents is that they genuinely want to feed their kids right, but they're just too busy. There's soccer practice, there's dance, karate, there's that orthodontist appointment, and of course (we've all been there) where your kid tells you at the last minute about that project and you have to run to the store for supplies the night before it's due.

It's too tempting to swing through the drive thru, and I have families who admit that they may eat out at fast food restaurants even three or four times a week. It gets even more complicated when we have to consider our work schedules. If both parents work full time jobs or, you know, sometimes more than one full time job.

Seriously, cooking homemade meals from scratch seems downright impossible these days.

Welcome to Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black, Small Bite Edition. This podcast is all about supporting families in their efforts to give their children a solid foundation of healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime. I'm your host, Dr. Angela Black. I'm a board-certified pediatrician with over 20 years of experience.

I'm passionate about using evidence-based guidelines to teach my patients and their parents how to prevent chronic diseases for a lifetime of health. In today's episode of Eat Your Greens, we're just taking a small bite. Small bite episodes give you the opportunity to get advice direct from a pediatrician in 10 minutes or less.

I'll serve up a snack size answer to some of the most common questions I get asked in the office. Don't forget that this podcast offers. General Health Information about Nutrition and Feeding of Infants and Children. It's meant for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace the important relationship between a parent, child, and pediatrician.

If you have concerns about your child's nutrition, health, or growth, please consult your doctor. For more episodes, or if you would like more information about child nutrition and feeding, please visit www.eatgreenswithdrblack.com.

Welcome to episode two of Eat Your Greens with Dr. Black. In this Small Bite episode, I'm going to share what I've learned from 20 years of conversations with parents, a little bit of online research, and of course, my own personal experience as a full-time working mom. We're going to talk about tips about how to maintain a healthy diet while juggling that busy schedule that we all seem to have these days.



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So, let's get started.

Instead of counting down, I'm going to go ahead and start with the number one thing that you can do to help stay on track with healthy eating despite having that busy schedule. I'm going to do this because it's a bit of a recurring theme for all of the other tips that I have to offer today. The number one thing to do, and I'm sure it's not going to be a surprise, is...

Stay organized and plan ahead. It's important to look at your family schedule in advance. That way you know what you're dealing with. Which night is sports practice? When's that scouting event? Do you have a parent teacher meeting? What's your work schedule? Try to create a menu for the entire week in advance.

And that way you're going to know when you have time for cooking and which days you're going to need foods that do better on the go. There's a lot of new technology out there these days. There are calendar apps, to do apps, things like that, that you can download to your phone or your tablet. And these are going to help you keep track of all the moving parts of your life.

Personally, I like to use a meal planning app. There are a lot out there to choose from. You just do a quick internet search; you can find one that meets your needs. They include functions like a calendar feature, so you can plan your menu in advance. You can either input your existing family recipes manually, Or, if you prefer, you can even download new ones from your favorite food blogger online straight into the app.

You can get nutritional information, and some of them even let you create a grocery list based on your selected recipes. The one I like to use is called Plan to Eat. I originally downloaded it to organize my recipes, but I also like how it helped me cut down on my budget for eating out. I can easily import recipes from the internet, and then I can customize them to suit my needs.

The other thing I like about it is how I can cook directly from my tablet in the kitchen without having to print a recipe. If you go to the show website, www.eatgreenswithdrblack.com, you can find a referral code for the Plan to Eat app. It'll give you a 20 percent discount off the subscription price. I would like to point out that even though I do earn a small commission for referrals, I started using this app long before I ever even dreamed of starting a podcast. I have recommended it to a bunch of my friends and basically, I recommend it regardless of whether you click on the link or not.

So, let's move on to shopping. I don't know about you, but it doesn't seem to matter if I have 5 ingredients or 50 ingredients on my grocery list. If I walk into that grocery store, I am not getting out of there in less than an hour.



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Usually longer. Also, I really hate shopping. If you've ever met me, you know this. I am not a shopper. I would rather starve to death than walk into the grocery store on a busy Saturday afternoon. So, this is why online ordering with curbside pickup has been such a game changer for me. If you don't already use this, I highly recommend it.

Most grocery store chains usually offer this for free. Some will have a small fee, especially for same day service. Uh, here in Texas, we have HEB. They have this app that you can use. You place your order online. It can save your most frequently purchased items to a list, so it makes it even faster to order.

And it also allows you to redeem coupons. I usually place my order a few days in advance. This gives me time to add things that I forgot the first time around or that I didn't realize I needed. So, I highly recommend Curbside. A couple of other benefits besides just time saving, when you use Curbside Shopping, it definitely saves you money.

Because you're not doing all that impulse buying of things you saw that you didn't think you needed and actually probably don't need. Personally, I think an even bigger bonus would be not having to listen to your children whine about buying candy in the checkout line. I think I would use it for that reason alone.

Let's move on to meal prepping. I admit, this is something that I'm really not that good at, but I definitely think it can save a bunch of time. Once you get those groceries home, try setting aside some time to pre chop the vegetables or maybe preassemble the entire recipe. You can store it in the refrigerator until it's time to cook it.

If you plan recipes that use similar ingredients, you can reduce that prep time even further. For example, I might use some brown rice in a burrito bowl, and then use the leftovers and stir fry later in the week. The same goes for things like beans. You can cook a big pot of beans for chili, and then later in the week repurpose those beans for tacos.

Another good idea is to include the whole family in the meal preparation process. Even little kids can use one of those boiled egg slicers to cut up soft fruit. Another thing people do is repurpose old fashioned ice cube trays or muffin tins to freeze individual portions that can be used later in soups or blended.

I grow my own basil every summer, and then I can make homemade vegan pesto. I'll freeze it in little cubes and store it in a reusable bag in the freezer. And then on a busy night, all I have to do is boil a pot of pasta. I can throw in a few cubes of pesto, add in some garlic and a variety of frozen vegetables, and I've got a really fast one pot meal.

Another good thing to do with extra rice or chopped onions, peppers, jalapenos, things like that, is to go ahead and freeze those, and then you have them available for quick



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use on a busy night. This is a lot less expensive than buying them pre-chopped from the grocery store.

If you have the budget and the counter space, there are a ton of kitchen gadgets available now that will cut down cooking time immensely. We all know about crock pots and food processors. Now there's also instant pots and air fryers and grills, all kinds of things out there. But before you spend a ton of money on those, don't forget about your trusty microwave. Did you know you can make baked potatoes in the microwave at a fraction of the time it takes in your regular oven? Not only is this faster, but it cuts way down on the amount of energy used, which is really great for the environment and also your utility bill.

In general, it's always best to use whole food ingredients when cooking, but that is more time consuming. So, if that's just not possible for you, at least try to look for options in the store that have the least processed ingredients. These days you can find a lot of soup kits or salad kits. One thing I really appreciate about our local Texas HEB chain is that they have an entire section of premade meals that you just throw in the microwave or oven for a quick dinner.

I would caution you to watch out for added salt and sugar and try to choose things with fewer high fat meats and dairy. Look for things that are more plant based to be more healthy. And unfortunately, that convenience does come with an added cost.

For my final tip, on those super busy days when you're rushing from one activity to another, avoid trips through the drive thru or the convenience store by bringing things like sandwiches and snacks that don't require a lot of refrigeration.

You might do things like peanut butter and banana sandwiches or pre-cut fruit. You can get nuts or trail mix and I always like pre-cut veggies with hummus. Don't forget that pre-filled reusable water bottle for easy hydration.

You can find pretty high quality and affordable coolers now to put in the back of your car. These keep foods cool for a surprisingly long amount of time on a hot day. And, you know, I live in Texas, so that's really important.

I have one final thought to share. I know we really value the opportunities we have these days for our kids to participate in lots of extracurricular activities. But we spend a lot of time rushing from one activity to the other. In this episode, I have focused on ways to save time while still enjoying healthy meals and snacks, but I wonder if we ought to consider making mealtime as much of a priority as all of those extra activities.

I mean, considering that heart disease is the number one killer in developed countries and that it is entirely preventable with a healthy lifestyle - and by healthy lifestyle, I'm



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talking about that plant-based diet, things like stress management, regular exercise, getting enough sleep, and of course, avoiding tobacco and other harmful stuff.

I really think we should place a higher priority on slowing down. Take time to eat at home with your family and friends instead of rushing through the drive thru for a burger and fries on your way to the next event. I think we can all agree that that time spent with loved ones is really precious. It not only improves our physical health, but also our mental well-being.

Thanks again for listening to This Small Bite, and don't forget to eat your greens.