3.7: Time Constraints and Food Skills

The new food guide encourages cooking at home, eating with others, and enjoying food, (Health Canada, 2019) which speaks to the **contextual complexities of healthy eating**. Eating healthy is not just about consuming nutritious foods. There is acknowledgement that eating is a process that requires time, resources, and knowledge. Many people will tell you that lack of time is a barrier to cooking at home and healthy eating. It may not be possible for families to always cook at home or cook from scratch. Time constraints may mean that cooking at home utilizes more pre-made or easy-to-go ingredients and so it is important for you to work with the client to find balance and substitute more processed options.

During assessment, it is important to obtain a **holistic picture** of the client’s perceptions of healthy eating, competing priorities, and food skills (e.g., their ability to prepare and cook food). A plan of action may require strategies that do not completely adhere to the recommendations of the food guide. Rather, you may consider what strategies would best maximize healthy eating patterns for the client. You may not have all the answers, and so connecting the client with a registered dietician may be helpful to develop a weekly meal plan. Furthermore, cooking is a skill that some clients, for a variety of reasons, may not have developed. Lack of confidence in cooking skills may contribute to eating more heavily processed foods or eating out more often. An intervention may be to connect clients with cooking classes offered at community centres and encouraging families to cook together so that cooking skills may develop at a very young age.