

Cooking for One or Two

Plan your meals ahead

- Plan your meals for several days or a week in advance.
- From your plan, make a shopping list. Keep your shopping list handy at home, for example, place on your fridge. Add to it as you think of foods you need.

Cooking meals ahead

- Cook meals ahead and freeze in single meal portions.
 - Keep an extra meal in the fridge and freeze the rest in small containers or freezer bags. This will help reduce leftovers.
 - Always LABEL AND DATE FOODS that you put in the freezer or refrigerator.
 - Keep the containers where you can see them in the fridge or freezer, or they may be forgotten.
 - These meals can be reheated in the microwave, oven, or on the stove.
- These meals freeze well: stews, casseroles, curries, spaghetti sauces, Swiss steak, cabbage rolls and perogies.
- Make meat loaf in muffin tins, then freeze in individual portions.
- Make ground beef into hamburger patties and place patties between wax paper then place in a bag or container and freeze.



Throw out leftovers or use up quickly

- Leftovers tend to get forgotten and will go bad.
- See Handout — Keeping Food Safe.

Quick and easy foods

- **One pot meals.** You can use a skillet, electric fry pan, wok or casserole dish to make and serve the meal. For example, brown your hamburger, drain off the fat, then add chopped vegetables, rice or pasta, and liquid. You can use the same pot to cook two foods for a meal. For example, boil your potatoes and add your vegetables to the pot towards the end of the cooking.
- **Buy frozen dinners.** A higher calorie choice would be a meal such as a beef pot pie, and a lower calorie choice would be a Lean Cuisine or Weight Watcher brand meal.
- **Frozen vegetables are handy.** You can use only as much as you need for your meal.
- **Keep easy to fix items in your kitchen,** such as fruits, milk or yogourt, cheese and crackers, peanut butter and cereals. High-calorie bought drinks like Ensure or Boost, and hearty soups, are also handy (See Handout — How to Gain Weight).

Have dried, canned or frozen foods on hand

If you run out of fresh food use:

- dehydrated onion and parsley, and garlic or onion powder
- skim milk powder or canned milk
- instant pudding mixes
- canned and dried soup, and crackers
- instant mashed potatoes, pastas and rice
- cereals
- pancake and biscuit mixes
- canned and frozen fruits and vegetables, and juices
- canned foods: puddings, tuna, meat, stews, brown beans, kidney bean and chick peas
- vegetable oil
- peanut butter, jams and jellies

Have a stock of foods from each of the four food groups in your freezer.

Think small

- To limit waste, buy only the amount of food you need. Larger portions can be used in several different meals. For example, a beef steak can be cut in two. Cook one half for supper and cut the other half in cubes or strips, freeze and add later to a soup or stew.
- It is often more practical to buy small bags of pre-cut salad greens and vegetables than to buy whole vegetables that might go to waste. At the deli counter you can buy single servings of salads and cooked dishes.
- Ask the butcher to repack larger pieces of meat into smaller portions. You can buy one pork chop if that is all you want.
- Buy fruits and vegetables in baby food jars if you have a recipe that calls for just a small amount.

- Divide pudding or Jello mixes into four and make only one serving at a time.
- Buy refrigerator cookie dough and slice off only what you need for baking. Return the rest to the fridge and use up within the week.
- Many pre-packaged foods are available in single servings such as: hot cocoa, Carnation instant breakfast, dried soups, noodle packages and instant hot cereal.
- Store your bread and rolls in the freezer. Take out only as much as you need each day. Muffins, cup cakes and slices of cake can be frozen in small containers.
- Keep nuts and seeds in sealed bags or containers in the freezer. Just take out what you need.
- Freeze small pieces of brick cheese after wrapping pieces in plastic wrap.

Other ideas

- Check at the library for recipe books for “Cooking for One or Two”.
- Share meals with a friend. Take some meals at a senior centre, apartment meal program or restaurant. Order some meals from Meals on Wheels or other meal programs.
- Family and friends may assist with meals.
- Order groceries by phone and have them delivered to your home.
- Rearrange your kitchen to make cooking easier.
- A microwave oven can cook food easily and quickly.