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Planning Meals using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating

Good nutrition is important at any age. Eating well will help you feel your best every day and may even prevent heart disease, osteoporosis, diabetes and some cancers.

Aging itself affects nutrition. As you get older, you need fewer calories and the same amount, or even more, of certain vitamins and minerals. Planning meals to provide all the required nutrients in fewer calories can be a challenge.

The key to healthy eating is planning your food choices and meals using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. That way you will be eating a variety of foods and making choices that are higher in fibre and lower in fat more often. Most special diets for diseases or conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and high blood pressure start with healthy eating as recommended in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

Planning Meals

- ⦿ Start by planning for three meals each day; if you like, include one to three snacks. Skipping any meal, but especially skipping breakfast, will make it difficult to get all the nutrients you need each day.
- ⦿ Choose foods from at least three of the four food groups at each meal.
- ⦿ Make sure that you eat at least the minimum amount of servings from each food group every day. You can eat more depending on your appetite, age, size, activity level and gender. A registered dietitian can help you plan a diet that will meet your individual needs.
- ⦿ Plan your meals around grain products and vegetables and fruits. These two food groups should cover about 2/3 of your plate.
- ⦿ Eat a variety of foods every day to ensure that you are getting all the nutrients you need.
- ⦿ Choose lower fat and higher fibre foods from each food group more often.
- ⦿ Keep a written list of menu items to refer to when you are out of ideas. Swap menu ideas with friends to add even more variety.

Grain Products

5 to 12 servings per day
Grains provide you with energy as well as fibre and some important vitamins.

Examples of one serving

- ✿ 1 slice bread or ½ bun.
- ✿ 30 grams cold cereal (about 1 cup depending on type of cereal - see label).
- ✿ ¾ cup hot cereal.
- ✿ ½ cup pasta or rice.



Vegetables and Fruit

5 to 10 servings per day

Choose dark green, bright yellow and orange

vegetables and fruit more often as they contain the most nutrients. Try spinach, broccoli, carrots, squash, oranges, cantaloupe and peaches.

Examples of one serving

- ✿ 1 medium sized piece of fruit or vegetable (e.g. apple, banana, carrot).
- ✿ ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit or vegetables.
- ✿ 1 cup leafy vegetables.
- ✿ ½ cup fruit or vegetable juice.

Milk Products

2 to 4 servings per day
Milk products contain calcium and vitamin D, important for keeping your bones healthy. Choose lower fat milk products more often.

Examples of one serving

- ✿ 1 cup skim, 1%, 2% or whole milk.
- ✿ 2 slices cheese.
- ✿ ¾ cup yogurt.

Meat and Alternatives

2 to 3 servings per day
Meat and alternatives are important sources of protein, iron and B vitamins and are key for good muscle tone and immunity. Choose lean meats, fish and poultry, and alternatives such as beans, lentils and peas more often.

Examples of one serving

- ✿ 2 to 3 ounces meat, fish or poultry (about the size of a deck of cards).
- ✿ 1/3 to 2/3 can of salmon or tuna.
- ✿ ½ to 1 cup cooked beans such as pork and beans, kidney beans, lentils.
- ✿ 1 egg.
- ✿ 2 tablespoons peanut butter.

Other foods

Some foods don't fit into the four food groups. These include cream, butter, margarine, salad dressings, jam, sugar, honey, candies, herbs, seasonings and condiments as well as high fat and/or salty snack foods such as potato chips. Also in this group are beverages, including water, coffee, tea, soft drinks and alcohol. These foods can add variety and interest to your meals and snacks, but most should be used in moderation.



Fluids are essential to life, yet many seniors do not drink enough. As we age, our sense of thirst declines so we need to drink regularly whether we feel thirsty or not. Aim for six to eight glasses of fluids each day including water, juice, milk, soup, herbal tea and decaffeinated coffee and/or tea.





Planning Meals: Variety and Balance

A healthy diet is essential to feeling well and enjoying life to the fullest. Recent surveys show that most seniors do not eat enough grain products, milk products and vegetables and fruits. Eating too little of those foods can leave you tired, more prone to illness and perhaps even at increased risk of heart disease, cancer, diabetes and osteoporosis.

Eating well starts with following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. (See Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 1.) The following suggestions also can help you eat a varied and balanced diet that is lower in fat and higher in fibre.

1. Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods

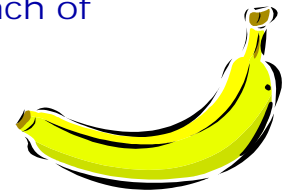
Be adventurous. Try something new each month, whether it is a new fruit, vegetable or grain product. Who knows—you may find a new favourite.

2. Eat more grain products to provide energy and fibre

- ⚙ Have a bowl of cooked cereal or high fibre ready-to-eat cereal for a meal or snack.
- ⚙ Enjoy a muffin for a snack, or with cheese and a fruit for a mini meal.
- ⚙ Try brown rice in casseroles and soups.
- ⚙ Eat whole grain bread/buns/bagels/muffins, whole wheat pastas and brown or wild rice.
- ⚙ Try other grains such as bulgur, quinoa or couscous.
- ⚙ For information on fibre, see Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 3.

3. Eat more vegetables and fruits for a powerful punch of nutrients

- ⚙ Start your day with 100% juice.
- ⚙ Keep a package of frozen berries in your freezer to sprinkle on your cereal.
- ⚙ Start lunch off with tomato or vegetable soup, a salad or some raw vegetables.
- ⚙ Make a vegetable stir-fry. Add some grated cheese and black beans, and you have an instant supper.
- ⚙ Toss a handful of frozen vegetables (or leftovers) into soups and casseroles.
- ⚙ Craving candy? Try some dried fruit.
- ⚙ Have fresh, canned or frozen fruit for a snack or dessert.
- ⚙ Enjoy a baked apple or fruit crisp.
- ⚙ Take advantage of seasonal specials. Buy strawberries, peaches, pears and asparagus when they are in season.



4. Eat more dairy products and other calcium rich foods to keep bones healthy

- ⚙ Use grated cheese on salads, casseroles or soups.
- ⚙ Add milk instead of water to canned soup.
- ⚙ Drink a glass of skim or one per cent milk as a bedtime snack.
- ⚙ Add skim milk powder to sauces, soups, casseroles and omelettes.
- ⚙ Melt cheese on toast for a change from butter and jam.
- ⚙ Try pudding, custard or yogurt for dessert.
- ⚙ Make a “latte” by mixing half a cup of coffee with half a cup of warmed milk.
- ⚙ Have a salmon or sardine sandwich, or add fish to salads.
- ⚙ Add a can of beans or lentils to soups and casseroles.
- ⚙ Sprinkle almonds on salads, casseroles and puddings.

5. Choose leaner meats and lower fat products

- ⚙ Choose lean cuts of meat, such as round, flank and loin. Enjoy poultry, fish and seafood more often.
- ⚙ Trim all visible fat from meats before cooking. Remove skin from poultry.
- ⚙ Enjoy a meatless meal by having baked beans, peas, lentils or eggs at least once a week.
- ⚙ Cut down on butter, margarine, dressing and sauces, and choose lower fat varieties.
- ⚙ Use a non-stick frying pan, adding a teaspoon of oil if necessary.
- ⚙ For tips on reducing fat in your diet, see Healthy Eating for Seniors 4.

6. Use salt, caffeine and alcohol in moderation

- ⚙ Try using pepper and other herbs rather than salt.
- ⚙ Cook without adding salt.
- ⚙ Choose “lower in salt” products.
- ⚙ Eat fewer canned foods, crackers, processed meats and other packaged products.
- ⚙ Drink no more than four cups of coffee a day.
- ⚙ Alternate cups of coffee with cups of hot water or milk. Perhaps what you really like is something hot to drink.
- ⚙ Try decaffeinated teas and coffees or, better yet, fruit juice or cold water.
- ⚙ Limit your alcohol to no more than one drink a day.

7. Keep active to help build stronger muscles and bones and to sleep better, feel better, eat better and maintain a healthy weight.

- ⚙ Go for a walk or join a mall-walking club.
- ⚙ Take the bus; you usually have to walk a bit at both ends.
- ⚙ Garden! Grow flowers and vegetables.
- ⚙ Join an exercise program for seniors, such as aquasize.
- ⚙ Dance, stretch, golf...do what you enjoy—try something new.
- ⚙ For a copy of Canada’s Physical Activity Guide for Older Adults, phone 1-888-334-9769 (toll free).





Planning Meals: Fibre Facts

Dietary fibre is the part of plant material that humans cannot digest. The fibre is found in foods such as nuts, seeds, legumes (dry beans, peas and lentils), fruits, vegetables and whole grain breads and cereals.

A diet high in fibre, along with exercise and regular eating habits, will help you maintain healthy bowels. Fibre helps prevent constipation by adding bulk and absorbing water, thus softening the stool. High fibre diets may also help prevent and treat a variety of diseases and conditions, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity.

Follow Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating to choose foods that are higher in fibre. Small changes can add up to a big difference in your fibre intake. (For more information on using Canada's Food Guide, pick up a copy of Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 1.)

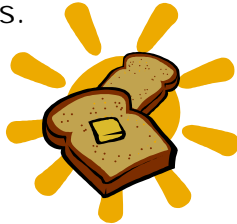
Best sources of fibre

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Grain products | <ul style="list-style-type: none">☼ Whole grain breads, e.g. 100 per cent whole wheat, cracked wheat, multigrain or dark rye bread.☼ Whole grain cereals, e.g. oatmeal, cracked wheat, shredded wheat, oatbran, granola, or any cereal containing bran.☼ Whole grain crackers, muffins and cookies, e.g. whole wheat, rye or graham crackers, bran muffins, cornmeal muffins, oatmeal cookies, fig newtons, date squares.☼ Brown or wild rice, barley, bulgur, wheat germ.☼ Whole wheat macaroni or spaghetti. |
| Vegetables and fruits | <ul style="list-style-type: none">☼ Fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruits and vegetables, especially those with edible seeds or skins, e.g. potatoes with skin, broccoli, corn, peas, raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, pears, apples, prunes, dates, figs, dried apricots or raisins. |
| Meats and alternatives | <ul style="list-style-type: none">☼ Cooked dried peas, beans and lentils, e.g. kidney beans, soybeans, black beans, chick peas, yellow or split peas.☼ Nuts and seeds, e.g. peanuts, almonds, cashews, flax. |
| Milk products | <ul style="list-style-type: none">☼ Although not a source of fibre, milk products are an important part of a healthy diet. |

High fibre menu ideas

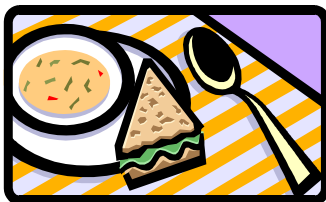
Breakfast

- ⚙ High fibre cereals such as bran cereals, shredded wheat, cooked oatmeal, etc. or a scoop of high fibre cereal mixed with one of your favourites.
- ⚙ Cereals topped with raisins, flax seeds, sliced banana or a handful of frozen or fresh blueberries.
- ⚙ Whole wheat toast with peanut butter.
- ⚙ Whole fruit instead of juice.
- ⚙ Stewed prunes.
- ⚙ Pancakes made with whole wheat flour and added flax seed.



Lunch

- ⚙ Hearty soups made with dried peas, beans, lentils or barley (e.g. split pea, minestrone).



- ⚙ Sandwiches made with whole wheat, multigrain or dark rye bread.
- ⚙ Green salad sprinkled with sunflower seeds, almonds or additional fruits or vegetables such as shredded carrot, sliced cucumber, oranges, strawberries.
- ⚙ Salads such as marinated bean, spinach or carrot and raisin salad.
- ⚙ Muffins made with whole wheat flour and added raisins, figs or dates.

Supper

- ⚙ Baked beans or chili.
- ⚙ Casseroles with added beans, lentils, barley and vegetables and a handful of raw bran.
- ⚙ Baked potato in skin, or brown or wild rice.
- ⚙ Meat loaf or meatballs with added raw bran.

Tips for Staying Regular

- ⚙ Eat regular meals and snacks.
- ⚙ Increase your fibre gradually, to minimize stomach bloating and gas. Your body will adapt to a higher fibre diet and any bloating or gas that you experience will disappear.
- ⚙ Drink at least eight glasses of fluids each day. Fluids include water, juice, milk, soup, herbal teas, decaffeinated coffee or tea.
- ⚙ Exercise regularly. Even a short, daily walk is a good idea.
- ⚙ Avoid laxatives unless your doctor has prescribed them. Laxative overdose may cause a lazy bowel that worsens constipation.

Adapted from Calgary Regional Health Authority, Mistahia Health Region, Edmonton Board of Health.





Planning Meals: The Fat Challenge

Advice about fat can be very confusing, especially since the recommended types and amounts of fat seem to change constantly. What is not in dispute is this: fat is an essential part of the diet. While it is good to moderate the amount you eat, fat should not be eliminated. Fat provides energy, supplies essential nutrients such as vitamins A, D, E and K and is an important part of all body cells.

Adding to the confusion is the fact that the many types of fat can have distinct effects on health. Some fats are known to increase risk for developing certain diseases such as heart disease and cancers, while others may actually decrease the risk. Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends choosing a balanced diet and eating a variety of foods in moderation. The same guidelines apply to fat: Choose a variety and enjoy each in moderation. (For more information on Canada's Food Guide, pick up a copy of Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 1.)

Ideas for moderating fat by following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating

Grain products

- ⚙ Eat more whole grain breads, pastas, rice and cereals, which are all very low in fat.
- ⚙ Monitor sauces and spreads.
 - Spread butter or margarine thinly.
 - Use jam on toast instead of butter or margarine.
 - Add tomato-based sauces to pasta, with a sprinkling of grated cheese.
- ⚙ Limit higher fat foods such as doughnuts, commercial muffins and croissants.
- ⚙ Read labels and choose lower fat varieties of crackers and cookies, such as saltines, melba toast, fig newtons, gingersnaps.



- ⚙ When baking, reduce the amount of fat in a recipe, e.g. by adding applesauce or low fat sour cream for half the fat.

Vegetables and fruits

- ⚙ Eat more vegetables and fruits, which are all naturally low in fat.
- ⚙ Use a dash of lemon or herbs on vegetables instead of butter or margarine.
- ⚙ Use "lower fat" varieties of salad and mayonnaise dressings.
- ⚙ Make your own salad dressing by mixing a tablespoon of vinegar (or flavoured vinegar) with a teaspoon of olive oil.

Milk products

- ☼ Choose lower fat milks such as skim, one or two per cent.
- ☼ Use yogurt or low fat sour cream instead of sour cream.
- ☼ Look for lower fat varieties of cheese, cream cheeses and sour cream. Choose sherbet, frozen yogurt or ice milk instead of ice cream.
- ☼ Use milk or evaporated milk in coffee and tea instead of cream.

Meats and alternatives

- ☼ Eat fish once or twice a week.
- ☼ Have a meatless meal at least once a week. Enjoy baked beans, an omelette or a vegetable stir-fry with chickpeas.
- ☼ Replace half of the meat in casseroles with cooked dried beans, peas and lentils or barley and some extra vegetables.
- ☼ Eat smaller portions of meat. Have two to three ounces (60 to 90 grams) of cooked meat (the size of a deck of cards).
- ☼ Choose lean cuts of meat: sirloin, beef round and rump; pork leg roasts, tenderloin and ham; white skinless poultry. Trim off all visible fat before cooking.
- ☼ For luncheon meats, choose ham, pastrami, corn beef, beef, chicken or turkey breast and canned fish more often. Bologna, salami, wieners, sausages and bacon are high in fat and should be eaten less often and in moderation.

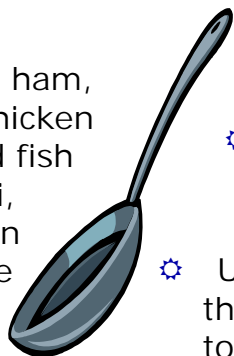
- ☼ Bake, broil, grill, poach, roast or braise meats instead of frying. Baste with wine, lemon juice or broth.

Other foods

- ☼ Limit high fat snack foods such as potato chips, nachos and chocolates. Choose pretzels and unbuttered popcorn instead.
- ☼ Choose olive or canola oils for cooking or salad dressing.

Other tips

- ☼ All foods can be part of a healthy diet. Balance higher fat foods with lower fat ones. If you have a hamburger and fries for lunch, for example, choose a vegetable and chickpea stir-fry over rice for supper.
- ☼ Eat regular meals and snacks.
- ☼ Look for and use “lower fat” versions of your usual products. Lower fat products still contain calories and should be eaten in moderation. If you don’t like the lower fat varieties, enjoy the regular products in smaller amounts, less often.
- ☼ Use a non-stick frying pan, adding a teaspoon of oil if necessary.
- ☼ Buy a cookbook with low fat recipes, or borrow one from the library or a friend.
- ☼ Use herbs and spices rather than rich sauces to add flavour to food.





Shopping for One or Two: Planning

Shopping for one or two people can be a challenge, but careful planning makes it easier. The following suggestions will simplify your trips to the store and save money at the same time.

At home



- ⚙ Make a shopping list and keep it handy so you can add to it as supplies run low.
- ⚙ Plan what you will be eating for the week, using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Think about how you will use leftovers. (See Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 9.)
- ⚙ Look for advertisements in newspapers and flyers. You may want to change your menu to take advantage of good buys.
- ⚙ Keep a list of prices for foods you usually buy and check it against advertised specials. The price in the flyer may not really be a sale price.
- ⚙ Organize your shopping list in the same way that the store is laid out, to save time and energy while shopping.
- ⚙ Find any coupons that match your shopping list. Use coupons to buy only the foods that you want and need. Try not to buy something just to use the coupon.
- ⚙ Eat before you go, so you are not tempted by impulse buying.
- ⚙ If you can't get to the store yourself, check whether your grocer offers a delivery service. Or contact a local senior centre, which may know volunteer drivers.
- ⚙ Arrange to shop with a friend. You can share the taxi fare and some of the larger grocery items.
- ⚙ Take your list, your coupons and glasses or magnifying glasses to read labels and prices. You might also want a calculator for figuring out which items are better buys.



At the store

- ⚙ Shop when the store is not as busy, so employees will have time to help with items that are hard to reach or lift and so you can comparison shop in peace.
- ⚙ Take advantage of discount days for seniors, offered by some grocery stores.
- ⚙ Stick to your list, but also be flexible enough to allow for in-store bargains.
- ⚙ Compare prices between brands. Store brands are often cheaper.
- ⚙ Check the “unit price” such as the price per ounce (gram) or per pound (kilogram). Most grocery stores display unit prices on shelf labels above or below the item. Bigger sizes are not always the best buy.
- ⚙ Buy the size that is the most economical and convenient for you. Smaller portions are available for a variety of foods (soup, fruits, vegetables, baked beans, stews, pudding, yogurt, cheese) and may be worth the extra cost if you can avoid throwing any away.
- ⚙ If the larger size is less expensive but more than you can use, share the extra with a friend.
- ⚙ Sometimes convenience is worth the extra cost. Buy a supply of easy to prepare or ready-made foods for the days you don't feel like cooking or are ill. Frozen dinners, canned chili and stew can become complete meals when eaten with a roll, milk and fruit.
- ⚙ Bulk bins allow you to buy exactly as much as you want of such staples as flour, sugar, mixes, rice, beans, dried fruits, nuts, cereals, pastas and herbs. Bulk items are usually cheaper, but not always. Check unit prices to be sure.
- ⚙ The grade or quality of a product is determined by looks, not by nutritional value. If appearance doesn't matter to you, save money by buying lower grade, such as Utility Grade or Grade B chickens and Canada Choice fruits and vegetables.
- ⚙ Read labels to be sure you are getting what you want. Check the ingredients, listed in descending order by quantity, with the main ingredient listed first.
- ⚙ Check the “best before” date to make sure the food won't spoil before you can eat it.
- ⚙ Beware of products with “shelf talkers” sticking out from the shelf or displayed at the end of an aisle. These products may not be on sale.
- ⚙ Watch the cash register screen during check out. Mistakes are made.
- ⚙ When the store is not busy, ask cashiers to ring your groceries through more slowly so that you can check for correct pricing.





Shopping for One or Two: On a Budget with Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating

Using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating will help you meet the challenge of shopping on a budget for one or two people. It is possible to buy a variety of foods in small amounts without spending a lot of money. Listed below are tips to help you eat well and reduce your grocery bill.

Remember to buy the size or amount that you can use; sometimes smaller quantities or individual serving sizes are cheaper if it means there is no waste. Smaller servings may also allow you to enjoy more variety.

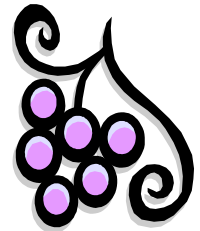
Grain products

- ⚙ To maintain freshness, keep bread in the freezer, well wrapped. Remove one or more slices at a time as needed.
- ⚙ Stock up when pasta is on sale; it can be stored for several years if left unopened in a dark place.
- ⚙ Buy plain ready-to-eat cereals rather than the more expensive pre-sweetened varieties, and add your own sugar or fruit if desired.
- ⚙ Muffin and cookie mixes are more expensive than baking from scratch but cheaper than store-bought baked goods.
- ⚙ Inexpensive buys:
 - Whole wheat or enriched bread;
 - Parboiled or brown rice;
 - Enriched macaroni, spaghetti, noodles;
 - Hot cereals, plain ready-to-eat cereals.



Vegetables and fruit

- ⚙ Buy fresh fruit and vegetables in season:
 - Winter - oranges, grapefruit, bananas, potatoes, turnips, onions, carrots;
 - Spring - strawberries, rhubarb, lettuce, beet greens, spinach;
 - Summer - cherries, melons, berries, peaches, most salad vegetables including tomatoes, corn, beans;
 - Fall - apples, pears, plums, grapes, cabbage, broccoli, beets, cauliflower, squash.
- ⚙ Buy only three pieces of each kind of fruit: one ripe, one medium and one green. Eat the ripe one right away and use the others as they ripen.
- ⚙ Look for Canada Choice canned fruits and vegetables, which are just as nutritious as Canada Fancy and vary only in appearance.
- ⚙ Buy frozen vegetables without added sauces and seasonings. They're a great buy, and you can use the exact amount you need. Compare the different styles; some cost more than others. For example, broccoli spears cost more than chopped broccoli.



- ⚙ Inexpensive buys:
 - Cabbage, carrots, potatoes, turnips, onions, oranges, bananas, apples;
 - Frozen orange juice;
 - Fresh produce in season;
 - Canned tomatoes.

Milk products

- ⚙ Buy plain yogurt and add your own fresh or frozen fruit.
- ⚙ Use lower fat (skim and one per cent) milks, which are cheaper than higher fat milks (two per cent and whole).
- ⚙ Mix skim milk powder with water and use alone or with an equal amount of regular milk. Add to soups, gravies, casseroles, sauces, puddings, baked goods, scrambled eggs or drink as a beverage.
- ⚙ Inexpensive buys:
 - Skim milk powder;
 - Mild or medium cheddar cheese, cottage cheese;
 - Plain yogurt.

Meat and alternatives



- ⚙ Buy only as much meat as you need. Two or three servings of meat, fish, poultry or meat alternatives a day is sufficient. A serving is two to three ounces (60 – 90 grams) of cooked meat, or the size of a deck of cards.
- ⚙ Save money by buying canned light tuna and pink salmon, which cost less than other varieties.

- ⚙ If you have freezer space, buy larger packages when meat is on sale. At home, immediately divide the meat into individual servings, rewrap in saran wrap and freezer bags, label and date packages.
- ⚙ Arrange to share a larger package with a friend. Ask your grocer to break open packages of wrapped meats and divide them into smaller quantities.
- ⚙ Use less meat in casseroles, soup, stir-fries and spaghetti sauce and add more vegetables, pasta, rice or beans instead.
- ⚙ Have one or two meatless meals a week. Try scrambled or hard cooked egg, omelette, baked beans, peanut butter sandwiches.
- ⚙ Inexpensive buys:
 - Less tender meat such as blade, chuck, flank, round, stewing meat (cook in liquid to make tender), ground beef;
 - Whole poultry, Grade B or utility grade, chicken legs;
 - Eggs;
 - Dried or canned beans, lentils, peas, peanut butter;
 - Liver and organ meats;
 - Pork butt, loin or rib, pork chops;
 - Canned fish.

Other foods

- ⚙ Limit purchase of high energy, low nutrient foods such as soft drinks, chocolate, chips and other snack foods. These are expensive and don't provide the vitamins and minerals necessary for a healthy diet.





Cooking for One or Two: Meal Preparation Made Easy

Planning and preparing meals for one or two can be a challenge, particularly if you are used to cooking for a large family or have never cooked at all. Cooking for one or two doesn't mean sacrificing nutrition or eating the same thing five days in a row. There are lots of options; with a little planning, you can enjoy a variety of foods every day!

Getting started

- ⚙ Plan your menu using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. For more information, refer to Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 1.
- ⚙ Find recipes that serve one or two, or revise your favourite recipes to make smaller portions. Cut recipes in half.
- ⚙ Borrow or buy cookbooks that feature small portions at your library or bookstore. (Suggestions listed on the other side.)
- ⚙ Collect simple recipes that use few ingredients and are fast to make.
- ⚙ Equip yourself with small pots, ovenproof dishes and mini loaf pans, to cook smaller quantities and make cleanup easier.
- ⚙ When cutting up vegetables, chop two times what you need so you have some ready to toss into a soup or salad.
- ⚙ Use a slow cooker or microwave for ease and to save time.
- ⚙ Share the cooking with a friend. It's faster—and more enjoyable.
- ⚙ Exchange frozen portions with friends.
- ⚙ If making a larger recipe on your own, divide the food into portions, eat one portion immediately and freeze the rest. Casseroles, soups, stews, vegetable pies and meat loafs freeze well. Store in containers, freezer bags or aluminium trays saved from frozen foods. Label packages, noting both contents and date. The nutritional value of frozen foods will decline in two to three months, so don't freeze more than you can eat in that time.

Time and energy saving ideas

- ⚙ Prepare meals when you have the most energy; perhaps that means eating your main meal at noon.
- ⚙ Use a blender, chopper or food processor if you have one.
- ⚙ An envelope dinner is easy to make and clean up. Put a hamburger patty, chicken piece or pork chop in aluminium foil with carrots and turnip or potato. Sprinkle with onion soup mix, wrap and bake.

- ⚙ Make one-pot meals such as creamed tuna with peas, hamburger stew, stir-fries or shepherds pie.
- ⚙ Try a no-cook meal such as a peanut butter sandwich, canned fruit and milk pudding, or a salad with tuna and cheese.
- ⚙ Plan for leftovers. For example, boil three potatoes with skins.
 - Eat one with low fat sour cream and chives.
 - Use one to make a potato-cheese casserole for the oven the next day.
 - Slice the other into a covered bowl and pour pickle juice over top, for use in a salad. The pickled potato will keep several days in the refrigerator.
- ⚙ Meals don't have to be a major undertaking. Mini meals and snacks from the four food groups can meet your nutrient needs. Try quick, nourishing foods such as cheddar cheese, cottage cheese, eggs, canned meats and fish, peanut butter, hearty soups, canned beans, yogurt, pudding and fruit or vegetable juice.
- ⚙ Take advantage of convenience items such as frozen vegetables, pre-cut fresh vegetables and prepared salad packages, as well as grocery deli fare such as cold meat, cheese, barbecue chicken, salad and pizza.
- ⚙ Muffin, biscuit and pudding mixes can often be made easily and in small amounts.
- ⚙ Keep frozen or canned entrées and soups on hand, such as meat pies, chicken fingers, breaded fish, canned chili and stew. To make a complete meal, add a whole grain roll, milk and fresh fruit or vegetables.
- ⚙ If you have difficulty handling equipment due to arthritis or other conditions, see your physician or health unit/centre, who can refer you to an occupational therapist for help.
- ⚙ For more ideas, see other pages in the Cooking for One or Two series:
 - Easy Meals to Make
 - Creative Use of Leftovers
 - Ready-Made Meals

Suggested cookbooks

You'll find these and other cookbooks on cooking for one or two at many bookstores and libraries.



- ⚙ Good Food for One – Easy Recipes for Today's Busy Singles by Margo Oliver. Self-Counsel Press, North Vancouver, 1990. About \$10.
- ⚙ Healthy Cooking for Two (or Just You) by Frances Price. Rosedale Press, 1995. About \$22.
- ⚙ Frugal Feasts. 101 Quick and Easy Single Serving Meals from Around the World by M. Spillsbury Ross. Doubleday Canada Ltd., 1996. About \$10.
- ⚙ Solo Chef by B.J. Wylie. Mac-Millan Canada, 1997. About \$23.





Cooking for One or Two: Easy Meals to Make

Can't think of anything to eat? The following easy meals use ingredients you probably have on hand. When looking for quick ideas, don't limit your choices by thinking that certain foods can be enjoyed only at certain mealtimes. For example, breakfast foods work for lunch or supper, too.

Breakfast

- ☼ Scrambled eggs, toast, orange juice.
- ☼ Pancakes, applesauce, milk.
- ☼ Pancakes/waffles, yogurt, fruit.
- ☼ Pancakes, sausages, fruit salad.
- ☼ Cereal, milk, fruit.
- ☼ French toast, fruit salad, milk.
- ☼ Yogurt, cantaloupe slice, muffin.
- ☼ Fruit milkshake, muffin.
- ☼ Bananas and milk in bowl, bran muffin.
- ☼ Cheese omelette, whole wheat toast, tossed salad.



Lunch

- ☼ Peanut butter and banana sandwich, milk.
- ☼ Beans on toast, tomato slices, milk.
- ☼ Macaroni and cheese dinner (add tuna and frozen or leftover peas).
- ☼ Tuna melt: mix tuna, celery, mayonnaise and shredded cheese, spread on buns and melt in oven.
- ☼ Corn chowder soup (can of creamed corn, milk, diced potato), liverwurst on crackers.
- ☼ Vegetable soup, cheese and crackers, pudding.
- ☼ Chicken or turkey slices, tomato slices and lettuce on whole wheat bread, milk.
- ☼ Cottage cheese, fruit salad, bran muffin.
- ☼ Broiled open face cheese and tomato sandwich, baked apple.
- ☼ Salad with chopped egg, cold meat or grated cheese, bun, yogurt.
- ☼ Egg salad sandwich, carrot sticks, milk.

Supper

- ⊗ Hamburger casserole (hamburger, stewed tomatoes, onion, rice).
- ⊗ One-pot casserole. Put these together, and bake:
 - One part meat or poultry;
 - Two parts vegetables (e.g. peas, carrots, tomatoes or celery);
 - Two parts rice, macaroni or noodles;
 - Sauce to moisten (e.g. white or cheese sauce, canned cream soup, tomato sauce).
- ⊗ Cod or other fish baked with mushroom soup, potato, peas.
- ⊗ Beef stew (stewing beef, broth, potatoes, carrots), bun, milk.
- ⊗ Tuna casserole (tuna, mushroom soup, frozen peas) on toast, rice.
- ⊗ Meatballs, potatoes, peas, milk.
- ⊗ Perogies, sausage, cabbage, milk.
- ⊗ Spaghetti noodles, tomato or meat sauce, green salad, milk.
- ⊗ Meat loaf baked in muffin tins (ground beef, chopped onion, spices) baked potato, mixed vegetables, pudding.
- ⊗ Chicken or tuna divan (cooked chicken, broccoli, mushroom soup), milk.
- ⊗ Salmon chowder (salmon, creamed corn and evaporated milk), bun.
- ⊗ Meatless chili (kidney beans, tomato sauce, chili powder) on rice, banana.
- ⊗ Chili, whole-wheat bun, carrot sticks, yogurt.
- ⊗ Beef liver and onions, boiled potatoes, carrot sticks, pudding.
- ⊗ Stir-fries (any fresh or frozen vegetables with small pieces of chicken, beef, pork or peanuts, soy sauce) on rice or noodles, milk.

Simply Soup

This soup is so easy to make you almost don't need a recipe. Look in your pantry and refrigerator and see what you have. Create your own favourite!

- ⊗ 16 ounce can of whole tomatoes with juice;
- ⊗ $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup of cooked rice, pasta, beans, peas or lentils (use leftovers);
- ⊗ 1 cup of chopped fresh, canned, frozen or leftover vegetables, e.g. cabbage, spinach, peas, carrots, corn, onions, potatoes, squash;
- ⊗ Leftover meat or poultry (optional);
- ⊗ Favourite herbs, such as parsley, garlic, oregano, basil;
- ⊗ Black pepper to taste.

Put tomatoes and cooked rice/pasta or beans in a large pot. Bring the soup to a boil and then reduce to a simmer. Break up tomatoes, add the other ingredients and simmer 30 minutes. Add watery vegetables such as spinach or zucchini last, since they cook very quickly. Enjoy with whole wheat bread or bun, milk, fruit.

Reprinted from To Your Health! Adventure of the Solo Diner.

Website <http://www.mdch.state.mi.us/mass/Health/Issue2.html>

Fact sheet adapted from Leduc-Strathcona and Mount View Health Units.





Cooking for One or Two: Creative Use of Leftovers

Planning for leftovers can make meal preparation easier, reduce food waste and form the basis of many economical, time saving meals.

Leftovers can spoil quickly, so take care to preserve nutrients and keep the food safe to eat. Immediately place leftovers in covered containers in the refrigerator and use within two or three days. Leftovers can also be frozen and used within two or three months. Be sure to label and date all packages, and use the oldest ones first.

Some ideas to get you started

Just about anything left over can go into a stir-fry, casserole, soup or salad. Can't finish the whole tin of soup? Use it in sauces, gravies and casseroles. Be creative!

Vegetables

- ⚙ Cook a bunch of broccoli, a head of cauliflower or larger amounts of other vegetables. Eat one serving hot; marinate some in vegetable oil, vinegar and spices and add to a salad; use the rest in an omelette, pasta dish, soup or casserole.



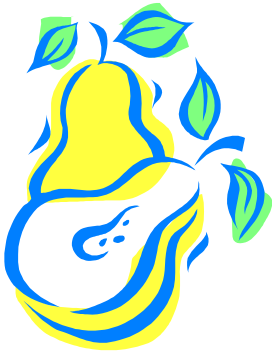
- ⚙ Top casseroles with sliced potatoes.

Grains

- ⚙ Chill leftover pasta for pasta salad, soups or casseroles.
- ⚙ Use rice in rice pudding, soups, casseroles.
- ⚙ Make individual sized pizza crusts from tortillas, English muffins or pita breads.
- ⚙ Use dried bread to coat chicken or fish, as casserole topping, in bread pudding or as croutons (cube, sprinkle with spices and toast in oven) for salads or soups.



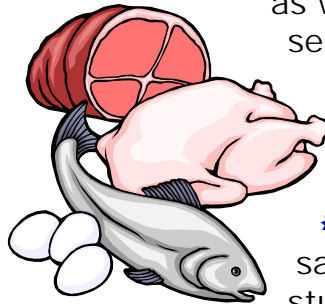
Fruit



- ⚙ Sprinkle fresh, frozen or dried fruit over cereal or add to pancakes or waffles.
- ⚙ Use fruit in salads or combine for a fruit salad.
- ⚙ Mix with yogurt or cottage cheese.
- ⚙ Add to baked goods such as muffins or sweet loafs.
- ⚙ Freeze overripe bananas and use in loafs and muffins.

Meat and alternatives

- ⚙ Serve spaghetti and meat sauce over noodles one day, then add kidney beans, chopped vegetables (fresh, frozen or leftover) and chili seasoning for another meal.
- ⚙ Fry ground beef, use in a casserole and freeze the rest for chili or stuffed peppers.



- ⚙ Bake larger pieces of meat such as whole chicken, ham or beef, serve hot and use the leftovers in stir-fries, hearty soups, casseroles, sandwiches or salads.
- ⚙ Use chicken, tuna or egg salad in sandwich one day and stuff the extra into a tomato or a green, yellow or red pepper the next.





Cooking for One or Two: Ready-Made Meals



Meals can be quick and easy if you start with a ready-made food item from the grocery store. The cost may be worth the convenience on days when you just don't feel like cooking. Selection is increasing as grocers and food producers cater to people looking for nourishing and convenient foods. You'll find items in all areas of the store, from the freezer section to the deli and canned good aisles.

Use a ready-made food item as the basis of your meal, adding from other food groups to make the meal nutritionally complete. For example, to a meat entrée add milk, a whole-grain bun and vegetable or fruit. Try to have at least three out of the four food groups at every meal.

(For more information on meal planning using Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating, see Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 1.)



Other places to find prepared food

You can also find ready-made foods and meals at specialty frozen food stores, restaurants (take out, eat in or delivery), Meals on Wheels and various community meal programs. Contact your local senior centres for more information on meal programs in your area.

Some Ready-Made Food Items

Frozen foods

- ⊗ Meat balls.
- ⊗ Hamburger patties.
- ⊗ Shepherds pie.
- ⊗ Lasagne.
- ⊗ Meat pies – beef, chicken, turkey.
- ⊗ Chicken fingers, wings, nuggets, etc.
- ⊗ Frozen fish fillet, patties, cakes.
- ⊗ Fish and chips.
- ⊗ Frozen dinners.
- ⊗ Pizza.
- ⊗ Macaroni and cheese.
- ⊗ Cannelloni.
- ⊗ Cabbage rolls.
- ⊗ Perogies.
- ⊗ Potato patties.
- ⊗ Waffles and pancakes.

Canned meals

- ⊗ Hearty soups.
- ⊗ Stews.
- ⊗ Chili.
- ⊗ Pastas.

Deli items

- ⊗ Salads – chicken, potato, macaroni.
- ⊗ Jellied and vegetable salads.
- ⊗ Meatballs.
- ⊗ Roasted chicken and pieces.
- ⊗ Cold meat slices.
- ⊗ Cheese slices.
- ⊗ Pizza.



Adapted from Calgary Regional Health Authority.





Cooking for One or Two: Your Emergency Food Shelf

Having an emergency shelf stocked with non-perishable foods is a big help if you can't get out to the store. You can plan quick and creative meals with just a few basic items. Even though these foods will last for a long time on the shelf, it is a good idea to use and replace them occasionally. Items stored in the freezer should be used within two to three months.

Suggested items to have on hand

Grain products

- ☼ Frozen whole grain bread, rolls, muffins.
- ☼ Crackers, Melba toast, breadsticks.
- ☼ Enriched macaroni, noodles, spaghetti.
- ☼ Enriched or brown rice.
- ☼ Biscuit mix.
- ☼ Hot cereals (oatmeal, cream of wheat).
- ☼ Ready-to-eat cereals.
- ☼ Flour.

Vegetables and fruits

- ☼ Canned or frozen fruits and vegetables.
- ☼ Canned, boxed or frozen juice.
- ☼ Dried fruit (raisins, dates, apricots).
- ☼ Canned or dried soup (mushroom, vegetable, tomato).
- ☼ Canned or bottled pasta sauces.

Meat and alternatives

- ☼ Canned salmon, tuna, chicken, sardines, ham.
- ☼ Canned pork and beans, spaghetti, stew, chili.
- ☼ Dried or canned lentils and beans.
- ☼ Peanut butter.
- ☼ Nuts.
- ☼ Frozen meat, poultry, fish.
- ☼ Frozen dinners.



Milk products

- ☼ Canned evaporated milk.
- ☼ Dried skim milk powder.
- ☼ Instant pudding mix or ready made puddings.

Other

- ☼ Sugar.
- ☼ Baking powder.
- ☼ Baking soda.
- ☼ Bouillon.
- ☼ Coffee.
- ☼ Tea.



For more tips, pick up a copy of
Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 12
Cooking for One or Two: Eating Alone



Cooking for One or Two: Eating Alone

Eating alone can be difficult for people of any age. It may not seem worth the effort to cook just for you. But there are ways to put the fun back into eating. Start with keeping your cupboards well stocked with nutritious foods that you enjoy. Treat yourself well; you deserve it!

Make it a pleasure

- ⚙ Create a pleasant place to eat. Set a table with flowers, place mat and napkin, even candles. Listen to music.
- ⚙ Sometimes moving to a different location or doing something else while eating is helpful. Take your meal out on the porch, sit near a window, go to the park for a picnic, watch TV or read a book.
- ⚙ Enjoy a dinner out in a restaurant occasionally. Ask for a “doggie bag” to take leftovers home.
- ⚙ To spark your appetite, go for a walk, try a glass of wine, beer or alcohol and eat your favourite foods.
- ⚙ Want a break from cooking? Try a no-cook meal, ready-made meals or other convenience foods.
- ⚙ Consider taking Meals on Wheels a few times a week or more.



Find companions

- ⚙ Share a potluck dinner with a friend, or form a regular lunch group.
- ⚙ Start an eating club, such as a SOUPer Supper Club: The host makes soup and others bring bread, salad or fruit.
- ⚙ Join a collective kitchen or share cooking with friends. Find a place where a few of you can meet to plan, shop and prepare several meals together. Take those meals home, freeze them and pull them out when you don't feel like shopping or cooking.
- ⚙ Ask other seniors who are alone for ideas and suggestions, and share yours.
- ⚙ Exchange recipes.
- ⚙ Teach your grandchildren how to bake.
- ⚙ Check your local senior or community centres; many serve weekly meals.

If you have lost your appetite for more than a day or two, talk with your doctor.

See other resources in the Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating series:

- 7 Cooking for One or Two: Meal Preparation Made Easy
- 8 Cooking for One or Two: Easy Meals to Make
- 9 Cooking for One or Two: Creative Use of Leftovers
- 10 Cooking for One or Two: Ready-Made Meals
- 11 Cooking for One or Two: Your Emergency Food Shelf