

# Make the Most of Mealtime



Mealtime is something to look forward to. But for some older adults, especially men living alone, preparing meals can be both awkward and troublesome. This can lead to the “tea and toast” syndrome of skipped or unbalanced meals. Hit-or-miss eating habits can, in turn, lead to loss of energy and malnutrition. Coupled with the fact that older adults often need more calcium than other folks (for strong bones), more fiber (to prevent constipation), and adequate supplies of other important dietary components, poor meal habits can directly affect your health.

## ***Here are a few hints to make preparing meals and eating meals more pleasant and convenient.***

- Make a list before you shop for food. Include fish, poultry, lean meats, nonfat dairy products, whole-grain breads and cereals, fresh fruits and vegetables.
- When you shop for meat or produce, ask a store clerk to cut or repackage large quantities into smaller single- or double-serving portions.
- Take advantage of salad bars in supermarkets. They’re a convenient way to incorporate fresh vegetables into your diet.
- Buy some back-up supplies of nutritious foods—like tuna canned in water or low-salt soups—for days when you don’t have the time or inclination to cook a full meal from scratch.
- Read labels. Avoid foods high in fat, salt, and sugar. These ingredients contribute to many of the chronic health problems that affect people after age 40.
- Prepare double portions of main dishes, so you can reheat leftovers a day or two later.
- Share shopping, meal preparation, and meals with a friend or neighbor.