

# Cooking for One in the Senior Years



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For a short-cut reading of the most important facts, skip through the leaflet and read only the parts enclosed in boxes. Then for more information, use the leaflet for company at meals during the next week. Read one page or section at a time until you have finished it. You'll be surprised how much you have learned. So, good reading and good health to you!

People often think they need different kinds of food as they grow older. This isn't true.

People need the same four kinds of food all their lives unless the doctor says otherwise. Of course most of us need less food as we grow older.

This booklet tells about the four kinds of food everyone needs to keep feeling well. It also tells about some of the food problems older folks have. And it gives many suggestions that you will want to try.

### DAILY FOOD GUIDE

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Milk and foods made from milk               | 3. Vegetables and fruits . . . especially: citrus fruits<br>green leafy and orange vegetables |
| 2. Breads and cereals, enriched or whole-grain | 4. Meat, fish, eggs and dried peas and beans, peanut butter                                   |

All of us should eat a food from each of these food groups every day. This is a good start for a diet to help keep you feeling well. But sometimes older folks skip one or more of these important foods. There are many reasons for this. The food may be:

- Too expensive
- Too much bother to fix
- Too hard to store
- Too hard to chew

Or perhaps food may not taste as good as it once did. Or food shopping may be hard to do.

## Food Too Expensive?

It is hard to buy food economically for one or two people. Often you can't take advantage of sales. Small-size packages usually give you less for your money than large ones. Food sometimes spoils before you can use it. But there are some choices which give you more food value for your money than others. Here are a few. How many more can you add?

### Do you often buy one piece of meat for several meals?

Chuck roast is a good example and it is often on sale. Use the meaty parts for pot roast and the bony parts for soup or stew.

Whole chicken is a better buy than breasts or legs. Use necks and backs for soup.

### Do you look for other good buys at the meat counter?

A large part of our food budget is spent on meat. Be aware of the amount of waste (fat, gristle, bone) when you compare meat prices. A cut with a low price per pound may not be the best buy if it has a great deal of waste. Check the servings per pound on page 8.

### Do you use homemade soup to stretch your budget?

Potato soup and bean soup are easy and delicious. Try making soups with ground beef.

### How often do you serve eggs as the main meal?

Eggs are usually low-priced in the late winter and early spring. Other meat alternates (peanut butter, dried beans, and peas) are also good buys.

**Do you compare prices for equal weights of bread?**

A large loaf doesn't always weigh more than a small loaf.

**Do you look for sales on items you need?**

Do you try lower priced brands of processed foods? You may like them just as well as the more expensive brands.

**Do you use dry milk?**

Dry milk costs less than half as much as fluid milk. Use it for cooking if you prefer fluid milk for drinking.

**Do you buy fresh fruits and vegetables when they are in season?**

Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables may be better buys out of season.

**Do you buy medium-size cans of fruits and vegetables?**

Medium-size cans are better buys than smallest sizes. The extra canned vegetable makes a fine addition to the soup pot! (And extra fruit can become a delicious salad).

**YOU CAN CUT FOOD COSTS BY:**

Using less expensive foods from each of the four food groups.

Serving smaller portions of meat, fish, and poultry.

Substituting meat alternates (dry beans and peas, peanut butter, eggs) occasionally in place of meat.

Preparing foods at home when possible rather than buying partially prepared "convenience" foods.

## Food Storage Problems?

Buying for one means special food storage problems. Will these suggestions help?

- Buy only as much meat as you really want. It's perfectly all right to ask for 1 chop or ½ pound of ground beef, or buy extra meat on purpose and freeze it in the freezer section of your refrigerator.

- Dry milk and evaporated milk are easier to store than fluid milk. But fluid milk keeps for several days if you are careful not to leave the carton out of the refrigerator any longer than a few minutes each time you use it.

- Apples, potatoes, onions, and other foods which are packaged in large amounts present a problem for the small family. Ask clerks to sell you a small amount. If they won't, could you suggest to a neighbor that you buy in larger quantities and share? Your neighbor may welcome your offer!

- Vegetables that are not frozen in a solid block are easy to cook in small amounts. Peas,

corn, and green beans are often packaged this way. Close the package tightly after you pour out the vegetable. Put the package back in the freezer compartment right away.

- Rice and instant potatoes are convenient for making one serving at a time. Then there are no leftovers to store.

- Many mixes are less expensive than buying small amounts of individual ingredients, and mixes take less room to store.

- Many foods that you might ordinarily keep in the cupboard will keep longer in the refrigerator. Examples are peanut butter, raisins, nuts, coffee, jellies, salad oil, jams, and shortening.

- Bread can be frozen for future use. Divide the loaf and freeze part of it in a plastic bag. Or freeze the whole loaf and pull out slices to thaw a few minutes before you need them.

# Food Too Much Bother To Fix?

Is the real question—is it worth the bother? When you eat alone most of the time, you forget how pleasant eating can be—and that it is worth some extra effort.

The best way to make cooking seem easier is to want to do it. Wouldn't you enjoy eating more if you sometimes shared a meal with a friend? Your friend may also want company. Do you plan for other kinds of company when you are alone? Perhaps a book or magazine? Or radio or

television? Happy thoughts and happy memories are good company too.

All of us have more energy some days than others. On the days when you have more energy, do you make a special effort to cook a food you like very much? Better still, do you cook enough for more than one meal? If a food is a favorite, it often tastes better the second or third day.

Many folks who live alone have other special ways to make meals pleasant. Some are given below. Can you add others?

- Once in a while, eat in a room besides the kitchen . . . perhaps in an easy chair in the living room or near a window if you have a nice view.
- Cook a little extra so you can invite a friend to share it with you. Sometimes you might enjoy fixing a special treat for the neighborhood children.
- Eat out with a friend occasionally. This need not cost much. You might go out just for ice cream.
- Try to get outside of the house for at least a little while every day. If you are able to, a short walk will pep up your appetite.
- When you are alone, pay attention to how food looks, just as you do when you have company. Food tastes better if it looks good to eat.

# Food Hard To Chew?

- Change the preparation but not the food. Cube, chop, or grind foods that are hard to chew. Let your knife do part of the work for your teeth.
- Choose from a variety of foods that take little chewing. There are many such choices from each of the four food groups.

A good set of teeth is one key to eating enjoyment. Help from your dentist may be the only remedy you need. But if you must put up with faulty chewing, even temporarily, here are some suggestions.

## **Milk group**

No problem with chewing here!

You may enjoy some cheeses more if they are cut-up or melted in cheese sauce.

## **Bread and cereal group**

No problem here either!

But don't depend too much on these foods just because they are easy to chew!

## **Meat group**

Many foods from this group are easy to chew any of the usual ways you might cook them: eggs, dried peas and beans, fish, and peanut butter.

### **Fruit and vegetable group**

You may find it hard to eat raw foods from this group, except for fruit juice.

Raw foods are not essential. Many cooked fruits and vegetables will give you the food values

for which this food group is most important. Turn to page 7 for a list of these.

The canned vegetables and fruits for young children—either regular or chopped—are worth trying. Some of them are quite bland and may need added seasoning.

## **What Foods Should You Eat Every Day?**

Actually, you don't need any one food. But your body does need the raw materials found in foods—the proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals. You probably know that these materials are called nutrients.

You need the same nutrients at 60 as you did at 25. The best place to get these nutrients is from food in the ordinary food store—not in the drugstore or in special "health food" stores.

Special health foods are expensive and unnecessary for good health.

Different foods are important for different nutrients. This explains why foods are sorted into food groups. Each group contains foods that are most important for a few nutrients. Choosing foods from each of these groups is an easy way to make sure you get the nutrients your body needs, if you follow the guides for each food group. These are discussed on the next few pages.

## **Milk Group**

### **Why use milk?**

- Milk contains many of the nutrients the body needs.

- Milk is especially important for calcium. Without milk, it is hard to get enough calcium into your diet.

- Milk is also important for protein and one of the B-vitamins.

- Some people think adults do not need milk. But they do—to replace small amounts of calcium that they lose from their bones.

### **What kind of milk?**

Milk comes in many forms. All of these give you the food values for which milk is most important:

whole milk	buttermilk
skim milk	evaporated milk
dry milk	

### **What about foods made from milk?**

These milk foods have about the same amount of calcium as 1 cup of milk:

- 1½ ounces of hard cheese (or about the amount for a cheese sandwich)
- 2 cups cottage cheese
- 1¾ cups ice cream

### **HOW MUCH MILK?**

Every day adults should try to have

2 cups of milk, either to drink, in cooking, or in foods made from milk.

But every day they should have at least 1 cup of milk.

# Bread and Cereal Group

## Why eat breads and cereals?

You have probably heard bread called the "staff of life." This name is deserved. Next to milk, breads and cereals give you the most food value for the money you spend on them.

- Breads and cereals provide protein. When you eat them along with milk, the protein in them is just as useful to the body as the protein in meat.

- Breads and cereals furnish calories. But they are not high calorie foods by themselves. If you don't want to gain weight, cut down on extras that add calories—sugar on cereal, jelly and butter on bread, gravy and high calorie sauces on rice.

- Breads and cereals provide iron and B-vitamins. But these nutrients are found in important amounts only in breads and cereals which are enriched or whole-grain.

A list of enriched or whole-grain breads and cereals follows.

## Which breads and cereals are enriched or whole-grain?

*Always enriched or whole-grain*

White bread and white rolls. In Idaho, most white

bread, doughnuts, sweet rolls, hamburger and hot dog buns, as well as dinner rolls, are enriched. Read the label to be sure.

Dark breads

Most dry cereals, such as cornflakes

All-purpose flour

Macaroni, noodles, spaghetti

*Sometimes enriched or whole-grain*

(The label will tell you)

Rice

Cornmeal Refrigerated biscuits

Flour mixes, such as biscuit, cake and pancake mixes

Soda crackers and other crackers

Refined cereals you have to cook, such as farina and hominy grits

*Not enriched*

Those products listed above not labelled whole-grain or enriched

Many sweet baked goods that you buy already made such as cakes, pies, cookies

Cake flour

## HOW MUCH BREAD AND CEREAL?

Every day try to have 4 servings of enriched or whole-grain

Count as a serving      1 slice of bread or 1 biscuit  
   1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal  
   ½ to ¾ cup of cooked cereal

Extra servings can come from breads and cereals that are not enriched. But don't depend so much on this food group that you crowd out other important foods!

# Fruit and Vegetable Group

## Why eat vegetables and fruits?

We depend on this food group for two important nutrients—vitamin A and vitamin C. Vitamin C is not found in any other food group. Some vitamin A is found in egg yolk, whole milk, butter, and margarine. But only certain fruits and vegetables (and liver from the meat group) supply large amounts.

Besides their nutritive value, think how much variety this food group gives us in flavor, color, and texture! These foods are important for roughage too.

Sometimes older people hesitate to eat fruits because they believe they are too "acid." Although fruits are tart to the taste, they do not act as acids after they are eaten, digested, and ab-

## HOW MANY FRUITS AND VEGETABLES?

### Especially important for Vitamin C

#### Group 1

Citrus fruits and juices  
(orange and grapefruit especially)  
Strawberries  
Fruit juices and powders with vitamin C added

#### Group 2

Cabbage—raw or cooked only a few minutes in little water  
Potatoes—both white and sweet  
Dark greens—cooked only a few minutes in little water  
Tomatoes and tomato juice  
Cantaloupe

### Especially important for Vitamin A

Dark green vegetables: (especially dark green leaves)	spinach collards beet greens broccoli endive
Orange-colored vegetables and fruits:	carrots sweet potatoes winter squash apricots cantaloupe

### How much?

#### Try to have:

1 serving from Group 1 every day

#### But have at least:

1 serving from Group 1 or 2 servings from Group 2 every day

#### Count as a serving:

amount equal to ½ cup

### How much?

#### Try to have:

1 serving every other day

#### But have at least:

1 serving twice a week

#### Count as a serving:

amount equal to ½ cup

sorbed in the body. In fact, they just act the opposite. So don't avoid vegetables and fruits unless your doctor tells you to.

### What kinds of vegetables and fruits?

All fruits and vegetables are good but there are certain ones that you should be sure to eat often . . . those especially important for vitamin C and vitamin A.

You can get the two nutrients your body needs from the fruit-vegetable group if you have only those foods important for vitamin C and vitamin A. However, many fruits and vegetables furnish small amounts of other nutrients. For this reason and for variety, it is wise to eat some additional fruits and vegetables every day.

## Meat Group

### Why eat foods from the meat group?

The meat group is important for iron, protein, and the B-vitamins. You can get enough of these nutrients from a combination of milk and enriched or whole-grain breads and cereals. But most of us enjoy eating foods in the meat group and like to include them every day.

There are many foods in the meat group besides meat. All of them furnish the food values for which meat is important. Eat dry beans, peas, and peanut butter along with a grain product or some milk to get the full protein value.

## HOW MANY FOODS FROM THE MEAT GROUP?

*Try to have*

2 servings every day

*But have at least*

1 serving every day and an extra serving twice a week

How big is a serving? This is not as easy to describe for foods in the meat group as it is for foods in other groups. Here are some examples of serving sizes.

When there is little or no waste (stew meat, hamburger, fish fillets, liver)

Count on 3 to 4 servings a pound

When there is a moderate amount of waste (poultry, some chops and steaks, most roasts)

Count on 2 to 3 servings a pound

When there is a large amount of waste

Count on 1 to 2 servings a pound

Eggs

Count 2 eggs as a serving

Dried peas and beans

Count 1 cup (cooked) as a serving

Peanut butter

Count 4 tablespoons as a serving

## A Few Words About Calories

Most people become less active as they grow older. In addition, the body works at a progressively slower rate after the years of early adulthood. Thus, the older person needs fewer calories than when he or she was younger. Yet many older people go right on eating the way they always did. In time, the extra calories are stored as fat.

Keeping your weight at normal levels is an important health measure. If you need advice on how to do this, check with your physician. Your public health nurse or Extension home economist can also give you literature that will help you.

## Don't Be Misled

Perhaps by now you are wondering why we have not talked about special foods that you may have heard are particularly nourishing, such as wheat germ, honey, yogurt, or molasses. These are good foods but they are not the wonder foods that some people think they are.

Exaggerated claims are often made, too, for many types of vitamin pills, and for foods grown on special farms. Sometimes these claims promise

to cure arthritis or other diseases. Unfortunately, many people spend a great deal of money on such products only to find that the claims are false.

Don't let this happen to you. Check with your doctor, the public health nurse, or your Extension home economist before you invest your money. If you need a vitamin supplement, your doctor will suggest one for you.

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