



Cooking to Fit Your Needs

Create a balanced plate using foods from all cultures by filling your plate with fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. The building blocks of a healthy diet are mostly the same for everyone, but each person has their own needs. Learn how to modify your cooking to meet your nutritional needs, budget, and lifestyle.



Adapting the Recipe to Fit Your Needs

Adapting for Diabetes:

- Add your favorite non-starchy vegetables to your plate such as leafy greens, zucchini, or cauliflower.
- Pair complex carbohydrates with protein or healthy fats to manage blood sugar.
 - » Pair apple slices with nut butter or whole grain crackers with string cheese for a healthy snack.
 - » Create a well-balanced breakfast by pairing scrambled eggs and whole grain toast or by adding yogurt or nut butter to a fruit smoothie.

For more tips on adapting your diet to manage your Diabetes, check out the [American Diabetes Association](#).

Modifying for Heart Health:

- Use your favorite low- or no-sodium seasonings, herbs, and spices such as oregano, cinnamon, paprika, or chili powder.
- Choose heart-healthy fats, such as canola or extra virgin olive oil, when roasting, sautéing, or stir frying.
- Choose recipes that incorporate lean poultry, seafood, or beans/legumes, and limit portion sizes of red meat.

For more tips on modifying your diet to support heart health, check out the [American Heart Association](#).

Adjusting Texture for Dental Needs:

Foods can be modified in the cooking process to make them easier to chew or swallow.

- Choose soft foods such as canned peaches, tofu, scrambled eggs, grits, or cream of wheat.
- Slice and dice fruits and vegetables into small pieces instead of eating whole.
- Cook vegetables by roasting, sautéing, or steaming until they are the desired texture.
- Blend and puree foods like soups or smoothies using a blender or food processor.

Cooking Healthy on a Budget

Use these budget-friendly tips to help make eating a variety of healthy foods affordable:

- **Buy Frozen or Canned Fruits and Vegetables:** Frozen and canned produce can be less expensive than fresh produce. These foods are often just as or more nutritious than fresh produce since they are frozen or canned at peak ripeness.
 - » **Diabetes-Friendly Tip:** Select canned produce that is packed in water or 100% juice with no sugar added.
 - » **Heart Healthy Tip:** Select low- or no-sodium canned vegetables and frozen produce without added sauces or seasonings.
- **Choose In-Season Produce:** Shop for fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season. For example, buy strawberries in the summer and oranges in the winter.
- **Buy in Bulk:** Buy pantry staple goods in bulk. Buying basic foods like whole grains, dried beans, and herbs or spices in bulk usually costs less per ounce than buying them in smaller packages.
- **Try the Farmers Market:** Using SNAP? Many farmers markets give extra SNAP dollars to buy fruits and vegetables. For example, if you spend \$20 in SNAP at some markets, you could get another \$20 to use on fresh produce!
- **Freeze what you can't use:** Freezing food can be a great way to take advantage of items on sale, preserve fresh produce, and reduce food waste. To freeze food:
 - » Let it cool completely to prevent ice crystal formation.
 - » Use airtight bags, containers, or wraps to remove air and avoid freezer burn.
 - » Label and date frozen foods to easily track which items should be eaten first.
 - » When you are ready to eat, thaw the frozen food in the fridge, cold water, or the microwave to prevent bacterial growth.



Saving Time While Cooking

- **Pre-wash or pre-chop foods before the meal:** Many fruits and vegetables like onions, carrots, apples, and oranges can be pre-chopped and stored in the refrigerator in an airtight container. Use within a few days for best quality.
- **Buy foods that are ready to cook or eat:** Although pre-processed foods might be more expensive, they are time-savers in the kitchen. Pre-chopped vegetables, low-sodium canned beans, and instant rice can all be great time-saving options.
- **Cook once for multiple meals:** Cook more food than you need for one meal and use the leftovers in your next recipe.
 - » Use leftover chicken in a salad or chicken salad sandwich.
 - » Use extra rice from a stir fry in a curry.
 - » Use leftover ground turkey in tacos or spaghetti sauce.
- **Make a list of your favorite easy-to-make meals:** Have a go-to list of easy-to-make meals for days you are short on time. Keep your pantry and fridge stocked with ingredients to make those meals for convenience and ease!



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