

Cooking and Preparing Meals

Preparing meals after spinal cord injury is simple enough with some planning. An important part of a healthy diet is preparing your own food. By eating at home, you can control portion sizes and reduce fat, salt and sugar intake. Using the right tools and devices can help make it safer and easier for you to prepare meals. Remember that changes in your sensation and strength may put you at risk for burns and cuts.

Aids to Help in the Kitchen

Cutting board with knife: A cutting board that comes with an attached knife.

Handi reacher/grabber: Helps grab lighter items from higher shelves and from the floor.

Lap tray and kitchen trolley: A lap tray helps transport hot items and protect your legs while sitting in your chair. A kitchen trolley is helpful to carry things and move things from one room to another.

U-cuffs and wide handles: Cuffs and wide handles improve your grip for utensils and other kitchen tools.

Other helpful kitchen tips

- Use the front stove burners. Reaching over a hot stove could cause burns.
- Avoid spills by only filling pots and pans half way.
- Place items you use often on lower shelves to prevent reaching and bending over.
- Use non-slip surface under items and/or to open jars and containers.



Cutting board with knife



Lap tray



Wide handle grips, non-slip surface.

Place commonly used items within close reach. Light items can be placed on higher shelves and be retrieved safely with a handi reacher.



Contact your Occupational Therapist for more information.

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Energy Saving Ideas

Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan meals ahead and avoid extra steps• Prepare meals when energy levels are high• Separate meal prep & shopping
Delegate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delegate more challenging tasks to caregiver or family members
Prioritize	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize tasks (e.g. cleaning vs. meal prep)• Choose healthy foods and ingredients
Organize	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place items used often in easy to reach locations• Put your garbage can close to your food preparation and clean up area
Pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slow down the pace by taking breaks often• Sit instead of stand
Use tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use adaptive aids and appliances whenever possible.
Posture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain proper posture when you lift, carry, reach and stand

Eating Healthy

Eating a balanced diet helps you stay healthy and prevent health issues. Canada's food guide provides guidelines on how to eat well (<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>). Whole foods like fresh fruit, vegetables, and whole grains are most important. They contain plenty of fibre, help boost your immune system and improve energy. Here are a few tips:

- Eat at 25-30 grams of fibre per day to help with bowel.
- Drink 1.5 – 2.5 liters (8-12 cups) of water per day.
- Buying prewashed food or ready to eat fruits and vegetables helps reduce preparation time.
- Smoothies are an easy way to eat more fruits, vegetables, and proteins.

The internet is a great resource for healthy eating. Check out the website www.EatWellLiveWellWithSCI.com for healthy eating suggestions.

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Kitchen Modifications

You can modify your kitchen to make working in it easier. Your Social Worker might know of funding options to help you modify your kitchen. Here are some tips on how to modify different parts of your kitchen:

Counters

- Wheel-under counter gives you easy access to the sink while in a wheelchair. Make sure that hot pipes under counters are well covered to prevent burns.
- Installing a counter at the right height can make working in the kitchen easier.
- Adjusting shelves to be at the right height can make better use of space.



Sinks

- A shallow sink (12-15 cm deep) can be easier to work with.
- Lever taps make it easier to turn the water on and off.
- A removable faucet and spray handle can be easier to use for washing and cleaning.

Layout

- Open areas in the kitchen allow for easier turning in a wheelchair.
- Non-slip floors improve grip.
- Widening doorways improves access.
- Improve existing lighting.
- Countertop microwave for easy access.
- Install switches and plugs at chest height.
- Reduce clutter to maximize space and improve access to commonly used items.

Appliances

- Wheel-under stove.
- Front stove dials are easier to access.
- Wall-mounted oven at counter height.
- The ideal layout of the fridge and freezer is very individual. Go to a store to see and try different options before purchasing.

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