

HIGHGATE SENIOR LIVING



Meal Planning Worksheet for Older Adults

Planning and preparing nutritious meals for one is no easy task. It can be all too tempting to grab a quick snack (packed with carbs) or frozen dinner from the freezer (packed with sodium and preservatives).

Most know that eating healthy can have a significant impact on overall health. It can lessen blood pressure issues, help keep the heart healthy and strong, and can even affect other things like mood and sleep. Planning ahead can make all the difference. That's why we've created this meal planning worksheet for families.

Meal Planning for Older Adults

Creating a healthy, well-balanced diet with foods that are appetizing comes with a whole new set of challenges for aging adults. Favorite [meals might not taste the same](#)¹ as they used to, and during a pandemic, you may be taking extra precautions to stay safe and keep the kitchen stocked with nutritious, healthy options.

Meal planning is one way to take the stress out of preparing meals for one. Whether you're an older adult who still takes care of their own cooking or you're a family caregiver who delivers meals you've prepared for a loved one to enjoy throughout the week, planning in advance can make a huge difference in the quality and nutritious value of meals. Meal planning also allows you to:

- Choose [healthy foods](#)²
- Address specific nutritional needs for chronic conditions, including [diabetes](#)³, high blood pressure, and [heart disease](#)⁴
- Ensure the week always includes some favorite foods

1 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/nutrition-and-seniors-why-your-moms-appetite-may-have-changed>

2 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/eat-this-not-that>

<https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/dehydration-depression-and-diabetes-3-highgate-assisted-living-facilities-fit-tips> 3

4 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/5-senior-heart-health-tips-for-your-aging-parent>

- Reduce trips to the grocery store
- Save money by not buying ingredients you already have at home or by buying them in bulk for use in multiple meals
- Feel more relaxed about the next meal

Using the Meal Planning Worksheet

This Meal Planning Worksheet is a template that can be used by aging adults or family caregivers to plan for a week of healthy meals, make a grocery list, note the ingredients you already have, and start the week off on the right foot.

You'll find:

- Top nutrient sources to focus on for seniors, including specific foods for those with heart disease, diabetes, dementia, and more
- Information on food planning, including preparation tips
- A downloadable and printable weekly menu plan and shopping list

Making a plan before heading to the store or ordering groceries online can help you feel more organized, save money and time, and choose options that are healthy and promote proper nutrition in this chapter of life.

Special Nutrient Needs of Older Adults

It can be challenging to maintain a well-balanced diet as you age. [Your body changes significantly](#),⁵ medications can alter your appetite or your body's ability to absorb key nutrients, and chronic diseases can affect your appetite.

Your [nutritional needs change](#),⁶ too. Older adults need:

5 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/how-important-is-senior-nutrition>

6 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/10-top-superfoods-for-senior-nutrition>

- ❑ More calcium and vitamin D to help maintain bone health
- ❑ More B12 to create red blood cells and maintain healthy nerve function
- ❑ More fiber-rich foods to stay regular, help lower the risk for heart disease, and prevent Type 2 diabetes
- ❑ More potassium to lower the risk of high blood pressure
- ❑ Less sodium to lower the risk of high blood pressure
- ❑ Less saturated fats and trans fat to help reduce the risk of heart disease

Here are the top five nutrient sources to incorporate into a weekly meal plan.

1. Fruits and Vegetables

Choose more red, orange, and dark-green vegetables, such as tomatoes, carrots, sweet potatoes, leafy greens, and broccoli. Aim to make half the plate veggies and fruits, which are good sources of calcium, fiber, and potassium.

- ❑ Add berries to yogurt or smoothies.
- ❑ Throw extra veggies into homemade soup. Enjoy a small salad with lunch and dinner.
- ❑ Make a fresh fruit salad, a fruit parfait made with yogurt, or bake apples topped with cinnamon for dessert.



7 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/whats-the-food-like>

2. Grains

Whole grains provide more nutrients, such as fiber, than refined grains. Choose whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, and pasta whenever possible. Look for the words “100% whole grain” or “100% whole wheat” on the food label.

- ❑ Make oatmeal for breakfast.
- ❑ Use brown rice instead of white rice in stir-fries or casseroles.
- ❑ Add whole grains like barley or bulgur to soups and stews.
- ❑ Choose whole-grain bread instead of white bread.
- ❑ Serve whole-grain snacks like whole-grain crackers topped with hummus.

3. Proteins

Older adults need to eat more protein-rich foods to help maintain muscle mass and strength as well as bone health. Select calcium- and vitamin D-rich foods, such as salmon and eggs, and vary protein choices with more fish, beans, and peas. Lean meat and some fish and seafood are also good sources of vitamin B12.



⁸ <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/from-the-highgate-kitchen-7-fruit-veggie-recipes-for-caregivers>

- ❑ Prepare eggs for a quick meal.
- ❑ Replace carbs, such as potatoes or noodles, with white navy beans.
- ❑ Serve nut butters with apple slices or celery for a quick snack.
- ❑ Make seafood the protein on the plate once or twice a week.

4. Dairy

Milk, yogurt, and cheese help keep bones healthy. Choose fat-free or low-fat dairy products, which are good sources of potassium. If dairy doesn't sit well, try small amounts of yogurt, buttermilk, hard cheese, or lactose-free foods.

- ❑ Make a smoothie with fresh or frozen fruit and low-fat or nonfat yogurt.
- ❑ Use nonfat yogurt instead of cream cheese or sour cream.
- ❑ Serve fat-free or low-fat milk throughout the day.
- ❑ Complete each meal with a cup of fat-free or low-fat milk, or dairy-free alternative.

5. Healthy Fats

Choose foods such as nuts, seeds, avocados, vegetable oils, and fish, which are low in saturated fat and trans fat, to help reduce the risk of heart disease. Switch from butter to oils when preparing food. Keep solid fats and added sugars to a minimum.



⁹ <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/whats-the-food-like>

- ☐ Add nuts and seeds to oatmeal and granola.
- ☐ Use avocado in salads and sandwiches.
- ☐ Add generous amounts of nuts, seeds, olives, or raisins to salads.
- ☐ Include fish in your meal plans.
- ☐ Try a sprinkling of low-fat parmesan cheese or a squeeze of lemon instead of heavy gravies and sauces to avoid extra fat.

Notes:

How to Prevent and Manage Chronic Disease with Nutrition

Eating healthy is an essential part of preventing and managing many health problems. Here are some of the best foods for common chronic disease among older adults, including heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, and dementia.

For Heart Health

- ☐ Leafy green vegetables
- ☐ Whole grains
- ☐ Berries
- ☐ Avocados
- ☐ Fatty fish
- ☐ Walnuts
- ☐ Beans
- ☐ Dark chocolate
- ☐ Tomatoes
- ☐ Almonds
- ☐ Seeds

To Lower Blood Pressure

- ☐ Leafy greens
- ☐ Berries
- ☐ Red beets
- ☐ Skim milk and yogurt
- ☐ Oatmeal
- ☐ Bananas
- ☐ Fatty fish
- ☐ Seeds
- ☐ Dark chocolate
- ☐ Pistachios
- ☐ Pomegranates

To Control Diabetes

- ☐ Fatty fish
- ☐ Leafy greens
- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Chia seeds
- ☐ Greek yogurt
- ☐ Nuts
- ☐ Broccoli
- ☐ Flaxseeds
- ☐ Strawberries
- ☐ Squash

To Maintain Bone Health

- ☐ Milk
- ☐ Cheese
- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Soy
- ☐ Leafy green vegetables
- ☐ Tofu
- ☐ Nuts
- ☐ Sardines

For Brain Health

- ☐ Fatty fish
- ☐ Dark chocolate
- ☐ Berries
- ☐ Nuts and seeds
- ☐ Whole grains
- ☐ Avocados
- ☐ Peanuts
- ☐ Eggs
- ☐ Broccoli
- ☐ Kale
- ☐ Soy

Notes:

[illegible]

Things to Consider Before Creating Your Meal Plan

Before you develop your meal plan, here are some things to consider.

Is there a medical condition that restricts diet?

For example, if you have a heart condition, your vitamin K intake might be restricted. You might need to watch how many green vegetables and salads you're getting per day and week. Or if your mom has dentures, she might have a harder time chewing meats or crispier foods like raw fruits and vegetables.

Have you gotten advice from a doctor?

Certain medications may increase or decrease appetites, so you may need to watch calorie intake or add calories to support a healthy diet and digestion needs. Some older adults may not be able to absorb enough vitamin B12.

As you age, you might develop difficulty eating raw vegetables, or food might not taste quite the same. Many seniors struggle with food and medicine interactions, problems chewing or swallowing food, and food tasting different, which can make eating a well-balanced diet even more of a challenge. Check out our [Nutrition Checklist for Older Adults](https://info.highgateseniorliving.com/nutrition-checklist-for-older-adults-download)¹⁰ for tips on coping with common changes that affect older adult's appetite and eating.

Do you enjoy cooking, or do you want to cut down your time in the kitchen?

You might want to think about adding breaks from cooking into your meal plan. For example, you might order takeout from a local favorite once a week. Or you might order a food box that provides fresh ingredients and recipes for you to follow.

10 <https://info.highgateseniorliving.com/nutrition-checklist-for-older-adults-download>

Meal Planning and Preparation Tips for Family Caregivers

Meal planning is supposed to make your life easier, not harder. It's OK to move recipes around or take it off the menu completely depending on your mood or energy levels. Here are some tips to help keep menu planning for your aging loved one quick and easy.

1. See What You Already Have

Look in your freezer, cabinets, and refrigerator. Make a note of what you currently have on hand. This can help you plan meals around what you already have and will help you limit the number of trips to the grocery store and avoid spending money on items you don't need.

2. Think About Your Schedule

Choose meals you can easily prepare when you don't have a lot of time. Save recipes that take longer for days off. You also can prepare meals in advance to heat and serve on your busiest days.

3. Keep Breakfast and Lunch Simple

People are creatures of habit, so keep things simple and feel free to repeat the same meals for breakfast and lunch throughout the week. You can always switch things up next week. Some examples:

- Quiche
- Fruit with granola and yogurt
- Cottage cheese
- Scrambled, hard-boiled, or poached eggs
- Oatmeal
- Veggie wrap
- Green salad with chicken
- Spaghetti
- Chicken or egg salad sandwich
- Lentil stew

4. Find Quick and Easy Options

Sometimes there are afternoon doctor appointments or errands you need to run late in the day. Other days, there's just too much to do and no time to cook. Or maybe you forget to pick up an ingredient at the store. There are some good microwavable or stovetop meals that have great taste and flavor and are quick and easy to fix. Be sure to pay attention to nutritional facts and consider keeping a few on hand for these kinds of days.

5. Prep Food Ahead of Time

If you are very busy during the week, you may want to do some cooking prep over the weekend. Here are some ways to prepare food ahead of time:

- Chop vegetables that you will use throughout the week, and store them in air-tight containers in the fridge.
- Prepare make-ahead meals like lasagna to store in the freezer.
- Make mason jar salads that you can serve for lunch throughout the week.
- Prepare a quiche or breakfast casserole. You can heat up a serving each morning.

6. Plan to Use Leftovers

Consider making a few recipes each week that may take a little more time and effort but yield two dinners. Freeze one for a week or two later, or reheat the leftovers within three days for another meal. This can reduce the number of ingredients you need to buy and save you time preparing another meal.

[illegible]

Your Weekly Menu Plan

Use the Meal Planning Worksheet below to create a plan for a week's worth of meals and snacks as well as make a grocery shopping list and note the ingredients you already have.

Not only will planning for a week at a time allow you to go to the grocery store and prep over the weekend, but it also makes it much easier to involve other people in the caregiving process.

For example, if you need to go out of town or [take a respite break](#),¹¹ you can leave a copy of a meal plan for someone else to execute. Or, you might even [delegate the entire task](#)¹² of meal planning to another family member.

At the end of each week, save your meal plan. Once you have four or five weeks of meal plans completed, you can reuse them over and over and over again, making small tweaks here or there.

¹¹ <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/4-reasons-to-consider-a-respite-stay>

¹² <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/3-tips-for-getting-more-support-from-your-siblings-when-caregiving>

Weekly Menu Plan

Week of: _____

Sunday	B	Shopping List
	L	
	D	
	S	
Monday	B	☐ _____
	L	☐ _____
	D	☐ _____
	S	☐ _____
		☐ _____
Tuesday	B	☐ _____
	L	☐ _____
	D	☐ _____
	S	☐ _____
		☐ _____

Thursday	B	Shopping List	
	L		☐ _____
	D		☐ _____
	S		☐ _____
Friday	B		☐ _____
	L		☐ _____
	D		☐ _____
	S		☐ _____
Saturday	B		☐ _____
	L		☐ _____
	D		☐ _____
	S		☐ _____
Sunday	B		☐ _____
	L		☐ _____
	D		☐ _____
	S		☐ _____



This worksheet is brought to you by Highgate Senior Living, an industry-leading assisted living and memory care provider offering a holistic approach to care. Pioneering change in the senior living industry, Highgate is committed to creating a unique and desirable living option where each resident can live a life of purpose.

Visit our website at www.highgateseniorliving.com to learn more.

Highgate Senior Living. Each Day to the Fullest.

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