



How to Eat Well on Your Own



If “cooking for one” often translates into a peanut butter sandwich or a bowl of cereal, you’re not alone. Solo dining is one of the most common reasons older adults lose interest in food and stop eating right.

When this happens, you shortchange yourself nutritionally. No matter what your age, you still need as many vitamins and minerals as you did when you were younger.

Here are tips to help you meet the single-serving challenge:

- Buy individually frozen foods like chicken breasts or fish fillets, and bags of fruits and vegetables. That way you can thaw out only as much as you need. If a package of meat is too large, ask a store employee to repackage it in a smaller size.
- Store fresh foods like bread, whole grains, nuts, fruits, and vegetables in your freezer. Place them in small freezer bags in single portions.
- Cook casseroles and stews to freeze in individual-size servings. Be sure to write the date and contents on the packages. These make healthy and easy meals on days you don’t feel like cooking.
- Shop for small cans of fruits, vegetables, and beans, or freeze remainders from larger cans.
- Grocery shop with a friend and share items you can use only half of, like a bag of potatoes or a head of cabbage. ■

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Warm up with a hearty bowl of beef stew tonight!

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Can Your Hobbies Keep You Healthy?

An enjoyable hobby—such as reading, listening to music, or playing cards—may be much more than a mere pastime. Researchers tell us that hobbies can strengthen the body and the mind. Older adults who keep busy at enjoyable activities live longer, happier, and healthier lives.

Try these fun—and healthy—ways to pass the time:

■ **Keep moving.** Staying physically active contributes to physical and mental health. Plus, it may help you live longer. And you don't have to join a health club to reap these benefits.



Even routine chores, such as housework and gardening, can do the trick.

■ **Renew your library card.** According to researchers, reading regularly may significantly lower the risk for Alzheimer's. Ask your librarian to suggest titles you might like.

■ **Sharpen your pencil.** Mentally engaging activi-

ties also help keep your mind sharp. Working crossword puzzles, writing letters, and keeping a journal all count.

■ **Tune in.** Listen to informative programs on the radio, and watch educational shows on television.

■ **Reach out to others.** Participate in social activities, such as volunteer work, to keep your mind agile. Or get together with friends and play cards, checkers, chess, or other games. You also can look for a social club that matches your interests, such as a book group, knitting circle, or sewing bee. ■

RECIPE

Classic Beef Stew

Dining alone? Freeze the leftover servings of this winter classic for a healthy and easy meal later. After serving yourself, divide the remaining stew into individual containers. Write the date and contents on each one, and freeze.

- 1 tsp. **cooking oil**
- 1 lb. **beef** trimmed of all visible fat and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 4 **small onions**, halved
- 4 **carrots**, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 **large potato** (about ½ lb.), cut into bite-size pieces
- 1 cup **mushrooms**, quartered
- 2 **cloves garlic**, minced
- 1 cup **water**



1. Heat the oil in a skillet set on medium-high heat. Oil should just coat pan.
2. Add beef and brown, about five minutes. Put beef and all other ingredients into an ovenproof dish with a cover.
3. Bake at 325° F for about 2½ hours, until meat and vegetables are tender.

Yield: Four servings. Each serving provides: Calories 255; Protein 29 g; Fat 6 g; Sodium 116 mg.



Managing Arthritis in the Winter

Does it seem like your joint pain heats up when the weather cools down?

You're not alone. Many people believe their arthritis gets worse during certain types of weather. For instance, some people with arthritis say they feel more fatigue during the colder months.

Actively managing your joint pain helps prevent it from getting worse. Here are ways to keep up your commitment while the mercury falls.

KEEP MOVING

Even if it's chilly outside, it's important to stay active. Daily walking, swimming, or other moderate exercise can help control arthritis symptoms like pain. Consider these ideas:

- Join a mall walkers group or walk an indoor shopping center on your own.
- Take an aquatic exercise class at an indoor, heated pool.
- If you're braving the cold outside, wear layers made of silk, fleece, wool, or down. This helps trap your body heat.

STAY IN SUMMER SHAPE

Set a goal now to avoid winter weight gain. Adding pounds can be bad for weight-bearing joints like the knees.

One weight-control tip is to watch your portions. If you're craving a warm, comforting bowl of pasta, remember that a serving is only $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. Check labels and recipes for serving sizes, and serve yourself the right portions.

AVOID WINTER HAZARDS

Joint injuries actually can lead to arthritis. Watch for winter dangers, like icy sidewalks that can make you slip and fall. Wear boots with nonskid soles to reduce your risk of falling.

If you have to shovel, stretch your major muscles first. Try marching in place and moving your shoulders in circles. Use a shovel with a plastic blade, which is lighter than metal. As you're shoveling, take plenty of breaks. Finish up with a sprinkling of rock salt to melt ice on walkways. ■

A Primer on Insurance Terms

The Fall 2008 edition of *Living Well* introduced our series on health care lingo. Most likely, you have seen the following words on an Explanation of Benefits. We want to make sure you understand what they mean.

Benefit: Benefit is the value of insurance coverage as outlined by the insurance plan. It's also used to mean the actual service you've received under your insurance coverage.

Insured: You are an insured—as long as you are covered by your insurance plan.

Provider: The provider is the physician or facility that provided medical treatment to you, the patient.

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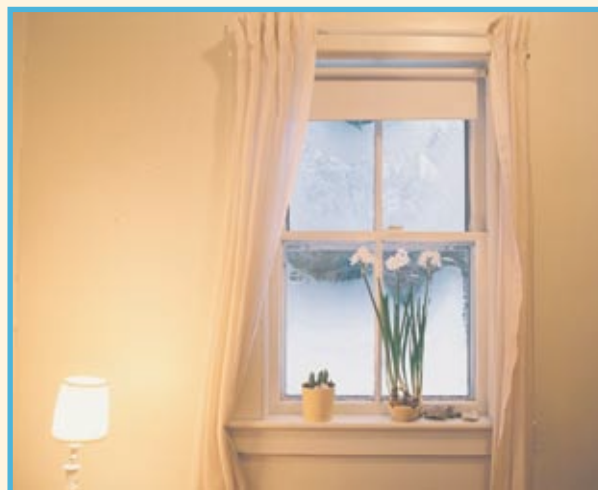
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HEALTH BRIEFS

Stay Hydrated All Season

Cold, dry air can cause itchy skin and asthma flare-ups. Protect yourself this winter:

- Drink lots of water. Don't wait until you're thirsty to reach for a sip.
- Add humidity. Using a humidifier can help prevent asthma flare-ups.
- Be skin savvy. Choose gentle cleansers instead of deodorant soaps. After bathing, apply a moisturizer when your skin is still damp.



Battling the Winter Blues

Shorter daylight hours and chilly weather can affect how we feel. A specific type of depression—seasonal affective disorder—actually may stem from too little sunshine. Even if you're not clinically depressed, you might feel blue during these darker months.

Step outside for about an hour around noon. The sunlight may help. Increase your indoor light with lamps and sheer curtains. Have your shrubs and trees trimmed so that they don't block windows.

Take a Shot Against Shingles

Shingles is an incredibly painful disease. It is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. After you've had chickenpox, the virus stays in your body. Years later it may resurface as shingles.

The good news is that a one-time shot helps protect you from shingles. In fact, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated its guidelines. It now strongly recommends the vaccine for people ages 60 and older.

Ask your doctor about getting vaccinated.