



Attending to Your Nutritional Needs

Lunchtime: Sally goes to her refrigerator, looks in. Steps to the pantry, peers into the darkness. Nothing looks appealing. Since her husband's death, Sally has not had much of an appetite. The emptiness she feels inside is not hunger. It is loneliness and despair.



To cope successfully with the physical and emotional stress of a loved one's death, you must maintain your health. Listen to the wisdom of your body. Rest as needed, and take time for some exercise, such as a walk in the fresh air. Your physical well-being is easy to overlook in the midst of all the legal and personal challenges suddenly confronting you.

Make good nutrition a priority. If your body is properly fueled, you will be in a better position to handle this time of loss and change. Avoid skipping meals, especially breakfast. Regular, nutritious, and moderate meals will help you maintain the level of energy you need.

APPETIZING MEALS

Regaining your appetite may take some time. Preparing a meal and eating might require extra effort. Remember you are not alone. Reach out to friends: Combine meals; arrange potluck dinners; meet in the park for a brown-bag picnic. It is important to try to make meals pleasant, and sharing them with someone often helps.

Take time to make food appetizing. Set the table with appealing napkins or placemats. Include in the

meal those foods that will look appetizing and colorful on the plate. Take time to set the table rather than eating in front of television.

HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

The best way to ensure that you are getting the necessary nutrients is to eat the Food Guide Pyramid way. The Bread, Cereal, Rice and Pasta Group supplies B vitamins, iron, and some protein. This group forms the base of the pyramid. You should eat 6-11 servings each day.

The next level of the pyramid contains the Fruit and the Vegetable Groups. They provide vitamins A and C, folic acid, minerals, and fiber. Consume 5-9 servings of a combination of fruits and vegetables each day.

The third tier of the pyramid is made up of the Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group and the Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dried Beans, Eggs and Nuts Group. The Dairy group provides protein, B vitamins, vitamins A and D, calcium, and phosphorus. Generally 2-4 servings daily of milk products will meet your needs. Meat, poultry, fish, dried beans, eggs, and nuts provide protein, B vitamins, iron, and zinc. Daily eat 2-3 servings.

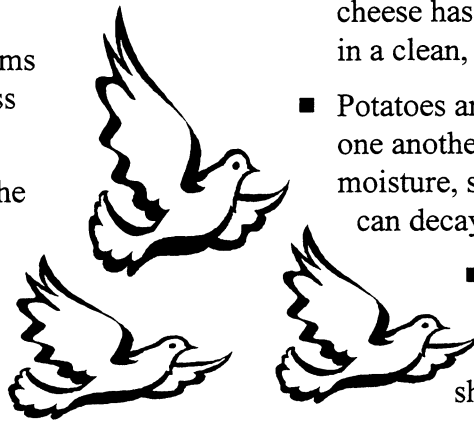


The tip of the pyramid is the Fats, Oils, and Sweets Group. This is the special occasion group. Foods that sit in this group should be eaten sparingly. Just how sparingly depends on your overall health and weight.

COOKING FOR ONE

Planning ahead helps in cooking for one. You will be able to eat more nutritiously for less money if you take advantage of specials, use leftovers creatively, and visit the store less frequently. Here are some additional tips:

- Make menus for the week or month. Include favorite recipes. These can be adapted to serve one.
- As you plan your menus, provide for using leftovers creatively. Use extra spaghetti sauce later in lasagna or as chili topping for a stuffed baked potato.
- Create a shopping list.
- Check specials and compare prices. This can be done in your living room using sale ads from various grocery stores. Plan your shopping route to include more than one store if there is an especially good sale.
- Don't be afraid to substitute items you already have or that are less costly.
- Watch for bargains on meat. The rule of thumb: One pound of high-fat or bony meat, such as ribs, equals one serving cooked; one-half pound of meat with some bones is a serving cooked; and one-fourth pound of boneless or ground meat equals a serving cooked.
- Buy fruits and vegetables in season. Every season offers its own unique variety of fresh fruits and vegetables. Most markets will let you buy fresh produce individually rather than in large quantities that may spoil before all of it is used.



- If a recipe makes a large amount, divide it into single-serving portions and freeze them. These can be reheated quickly in the oven or microwave.
- Use herbs and spices in place of salt to make meals more interesting. You can enjoy new flavors while decreasing your sodium intake.
- Freeze leftover meats and vegetables as well as liquids from canned and cooked vegetables. Put these items in individual freezer bags. When you have enough for a soup, simmer and add other ingredients such as bouillon cubes, herbs, spices, tomatoes, rice or potatoes. This is a great meal to share with a friend.

STORING FOODS

- Foods should be stored properly as soon as possible after their purchase.
- Perishable foods need to be refrigerated or frozen quickly.
- Bread lasts longer if stored in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Cheese and eggs should be refrigerated. After cheese has been opened, wrap it well and put it in a clean, plastic bag.
- Potatoes and onions should be stored away from one another in a cool, dry place. (Onions absorb moisture, such as that from potatoes, and then can decay more quickly.)
- Fresh fruits and vegetables should be stored in the refrigerator to prevent spoilage. Decayed food should be removed before storing.
- Poultry and beef that will not be used in two days should be frozen.
- The refrigerator should be cleaned regularly to limit mold growth.

EATING OUT

Eating in restaurants can be an enjoyable change of pace. With careful planning, it can be inexpensive too. Use coupons in mailbox circulars or newspapers. Reach out to a friend and share a two-for-one special. And remember to:

- Order low-fat, low-sodium, nutrition-filled foods.
- Ask the waiter to describe how the dish is prepared. Opt for broiled or grilled meats and avoid fried items.
- Ask for dressings, sauces or toppings on the side. That way you can decide how much high-fat content gets added to your food.
- Try to include a variety of foods using the food pyramid as a guide.
- Ask about serving sizes. Are half-portions or senior servings available?
- Ask about availability of foods not on the menu, such as fresh fruit or skim milk.
- If you get full before finishing the meal, ask for a carry-out bag to take home the leftovers.
- If you have a favorite but high-calorie restaurant meal, go ahead and occasionally eat it. Enjoy! Then balance it out over the next day or two with meals that are lower in calories, sugar and fat.

As you work through your grief, focus on maintaining your health by eating a balanced diet. Eat a variety of healthful foods and plan regular meals. Reach out to friends and family for companionship during meals.

REFERENCES:

Making It Through Hard Times With Good Low-Cost Meals, Alabama Cooperative Extension Service Circular HE-529, 1987.

Eating Better When Eating Out, USDA, Home and Garden Bulletin No 232-11.

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