

Nourishing convenience foods

Your dietitian has recommended you chose high protein and high energy foods. These can be challenging to cook from scratch, and convenience foods can make this easier. Convenience foods require less preparation. A wide variety of convenience foods are available from your local supermarket. Some options include freezer meals, soups, canned foods, pantry items, home-delivered meals and nutrition supplements.

Convenience food options found in supermarkets:

Pre-made meals

Frozen meals

- A large variety of ready-made meals are available including McCain, On The Menu, Super Nature Super Foods, Lean Cuisine
- Make your own meals from individual frozen items. Frozen pre-portioned protein foods include meat patties, crumbed chicken, crumbed fish, pies, plant-based meat alternatives.
- Frozen vegetables have similar health benefits to fresh vegetables. They are easy to prepare and can be purchased in steam-fresh bags.

Chilled ready-made meals

- A large variety of fresh ready-made meals include Youfoodz, My Muscle Chef, Aldi.
- Choose ready-made meals that contain protein sources such as meat / meat alternatives or legumes.
- Pre-portioned pasta, lasagne, quiche, pies, creamy soups are another option.

There are also many meal-delivery services available. Talk to your health-care practitioner if interested.

Pantry items

Packet foods:

- Long-life milk can be stored in the pantry before opening.
- Instant rice and noodles are a great source of energy and are quick and easy to prepare.

Canned foods:

- Tinned tuna/ sardines/ salmon can be added to pasta, rice, sandwiches or eaten with crackers for a high protein meal.
- Baked beans/ tinned spaghetti tastes great on toast. Try adding grated cheese on top for extra protein.
- Tinned legumes (e.g. three bean mix, kidney beans, black beans or pinto beans) can be added to cooked rice for an instant meal or mixed with cheese, tomatoes, salsa, sour cream and tortillas for a Mexican style meal.
- Canned soups that contain legumes or meat/meat alternatives are quick and easy.

Nutrition supplements:

- Ready to drink supplements e.g. Sustagen, Resource and Ensure are a convenient way to increase the protein and energy (calories) in your diet.
- Talk to your dietitian to determine whether supplements are suitable for you and to find out what, how and when you should be drinking them.

Home cooking:

- Many meals can be cooked in large quantities and frozen in single portions to have as meal options during busy days.
- Curries, pasta sauce and soups tend to freeze well. Write the name of the meal and date it was cooked to easily identify the dish.

Quick, easy, convenient meal options high in protein and energy:**Breakfast:**

- Breakfast cereal with milk and milk powder
- Fruit toast or crumpets with butter/margarine
- Yoghurt with fruit (tinned, fresh or frozen)
- Yoghurt with muesli and fruit

Main meals:

- Rice sachet + flavoured tinned tuna/ canned beans + steamed frozen vegetables
- Canned soup with cream/sour cream + bread roll with margarine/butter
- Frozen pre-prepared meal
- Frozen pizza with a side of pre-washed salad greens in oil-based dressing
- Heated pre-made pasta meal + extra cheese on top
- Heated plain pasta sachet + tinned tuna, pesto, sun-dried tomatoes and cheese
- Frozen roast dinner with extra pre-made gravy + steam fresh vegetables
- Baked beans/tinned spaghetti or sardines on toast
- Frozen quiche + side of steamed frozen vegetables + added butter/margarine
- Chicken Kiev + frozen vegetables + potato wedges
- Meat pie + wedges + steamed frozen vegetables
- Fish fingers + frozen vegetables + potato wedges
- Beef lasagne + pre-washed salad in oil-based dressing with cheese or nuts

Snack options:

- Nuts or seeds
- Dried fruit
- Individual serve yoghurts/custards
- Pre-sliced cheese with crackers
- Muesli bar or nut bar
- Peanut butter with biscuits or bread.

Drinks:

- UHT plain/flavoured milk
- Long life juice
- Milk with Milo/milk flavouring
- Nutritional supplements e.g. Sustagen/Resource
- Breakfast drinks e.g. Up&Go

Convenient cooking methods:

Microwaving:

Microwaves can be used for defrosting and reheating pre-made frozen meals. They can also be used to steam vegetables and make porridge, scrambled eggs or rice. Cooking times may need to be adjusted depending on the microwave.

Porridge

1. Place desired quantity of quick oats into microwaveable bowl.
2. Cover with milk.
3. For $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of oats microwave 1 minute, then mix and microwave for a further 30 seconds.

Tip: Add 2 heaped teaspoons of milk powder for extra protein and energy

Scrambled eggs

1. Crack two eggs into a bowl and add two tablespoons of milk (more milk can be added to make dish softer)
2. Whisk together
3. Place in microwave for 1 minute then take out and whisk
4. Microwave for further 30 seconds to 1 minute depending on quantity of milk

Tip: Use cream instead of milk to increase energy content

Air Fryer:

Air fryers allow you to cook food that would usually take a long time in the oven more quickly. This makes meal preparation of frozen crumbed foods and certain meats quick and easy!

For more recipe ideas:

For microwave meal, slow cooker or air fryer recipe ideas check recipe books or visit:

www.healthyfoodguide.com.au

www.taste.com.au

www.healthier.qld.gov.au

Follow the food safety tips below to ensure your food is safe to eat.

Food safety tips

- Frozen meals should be used within three months.
- Put meals in small containers to ensure quick freezing.
- Ensure meals are reheated thoroughly before eating.
- Do not re-freeze meals.
- Label your meals with the date and meal type to ensure you use them in time.
- Make sure food prepared used an air fryer is fully cooked before eating.