

Healthy Eating Tips for Busy Caregivers

Caregivers can follow these practical nutrition tips to help them eat more nutritiously and have more energy throughout their days.

A caregiver's life often means being on the go and putting other people's needs ahead of your own. No wonder it can seem so difficult to eat healthily. Forget fussy, complicated and time-consuming — caregivers often need simple strategies for upping their good-nutrition game. Take a look at the following time-saving and energy-boosting ideas and try one or two each week. In a couple of months, you could be eating better and feeling better from simply giving yourself the gift of healthier habits.

Healthy Time Savers

- Fresh meals are great, but you don't always have time to chop and sauté your way to a healthy dinner. Stock your freezer with a few healthy frozen dinners from the supermarket freezer section. Look for low-sodium options, if possible.
- If you have friends or co-workers who are telling you they want to help, take them up on it! Ask them to drop off a healthy meal each week.
- Meal-kit companies can be a great way to get all the ingredients you need for a perfectly portioned meal right to your door. (You can usually pick online how many people you want to cook for.) You can even choose vegetarian meals or ones for your specific dietary needs.
- Many grocery stores let you shop and pay for food and other items online, then pick them up in the store parking lot without leaving your car. This can be a huge time saver. It can be a lot easier to stick to a healthy shopping list when you're not tempted by impulse buys!



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Healthy Energy Boosters

- Load up on H₂O. Try to drink at least eight 8-oz. glasses of water daily to help reduce fatigue and keep you hydrated.
- Make the most of breakfast, because morning time is usually when you feel the most rested and have energy to eat. Think high-protein foods like eggs, whole grain toast with peanut butter, and protein-rich smoothies.
- Look for easy ways to up your protein intake. Add meats sold in cans or pouches (tuna, chicken, turkey or ham) to noodles, rice or potato dinners.
- Whenever you can, plan some light activity before and after eating. You might take the person you're caring for on a walk around the block before lunch or save a heavy-duty cleaning chore for right after dinner to help with digestion and boost your energy.
- Slow-cooker meals are another great idea. Prep them in the morning, and simply pop off the lid and enjoy the meal later that evening.
- Practice good portion control, because overeating may lead to sluggishness. Make your lunchtime sandwich with one slice of bread instead of two, for example. Small changes over time can create big results.
- When shuttling between medical appointments, avoid going for fast food or using vending machines. Instead, pack an insulated lunch bag with fresh fruit, mixed nuts, veggies-and-hummus and other snackable foods. It may help lower cravings and give you healthy fuel to power the rest of your day.

Sources:

Harvard Medical School: 4 ways to boost your energy naturally with breakfast

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/4-ways-to-boost-your-energy-naturally-withbreakfast>

AARP: Healthy eating while caregiving

<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/health/info-2017/healthy-eating-caregiving.html>

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