

Parkwood Institute Acquired Brain Injury Outpatient Program Tip sheet

Meal planning

Many patients report difficulties with grocery shopping and choosing meals for themselves and their family members. Eating a well balanced diet can help the brain heal. We recommend following the Canada Food Guide.

Sometimes CHOOSING meals to make is the hardest part. You may have a number of recipes that you enjoy making, or you may feel lost with deciding what to make for supper. One way to make this task less stressful is to plan out your meals for the week; this allows you to devote time during a non-stressful time to plan your meals, ask members of your family what they like to eat, and check to see what you already have.

Meal planning should NOT be done IN the grocery store when you are already overwhelmed.

Please see 'My Menu Planner' from EatRight Ontario for 7 easy steps for how to do meal planning.

The ABI team recommends to meal plan in the following ways:

YOU WILL NEED YOUR EAT SHEET TO DO MEAL PLANNING

1. Choose which meals you would like to eat during the week. Some people like to plan out breakfast, lunch, dinner and 2 snacks; others just want to focus on supper. You can also do this for kids' lunches too.

Can't come up with the ideas? Here's some tips:

- a. Ask your family for ideas or requests
- b. Call your mom/mother-in-law for family favourite meals
- c. Ask coworkers, neighbours, friends for easy recipes

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- d. Check out some websites:
- i. www.kraftkitchens.com (online or magazine based)
 - ii. www.mymilkcalendar.com (online or calendar based)
 - iii. www.thescramble.com (online)
 - iv. www.pinterest.com (beware! This can pull you in and distract you)
 - v. www.inspired.ca (online and magazine based, associated with Sobey's grocery stores)
2. Write down the items and ingredients you need to make those meals. This is a good time to check inventory as well, so you aren't buying extra items that are not needed (i.e. you don't need 6 jars of mayonnaise unless you are making tuna salad sandwiches for an army).
3. Write down other items you wish you buy at the grocery store which are not necessarily associated with a meal (i.e. cookies, toilet paper, toothpaste).
4. Bring the list with you to the store. I recommend taking a photo of it with your phone if possible. The act of writing it down will assist with memory of the list, but if possible, let the list remember it for you, to make it easier. You may notice that the cost of your bill goes down, because if you only buy what's on your list (or what you need), you are less likely to overspend.

Other tips:

- Keep a running grocery list available to write down items on it as they run out (i.e. napkins)
- There are menu planning apps available; they can be labour intensive to start, but then become quite easy once you've invested the work. You could keep a list in the notes/memos of your phone as well.
- Reuse your menu plans. Plan out 4 weeks' worth of meals, and then start rotating.
- Use a pick list for meals (see example) to help with deciding what to eat. So all of the ideas are there, now it's just selecting.
- Try a new recipe each week to see if you can build on your menu.

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