

prep ahead cooking tips

Rheumatoid Arthritis

The pain and fatigue that comes with rheumatoid arthritis can make it difficult to get healthy meals on the table. Below are some tips for making meal times a little easier, especially during an RA flare.

Plan Ahead

Having a plan in place is the best way to stay organized. Make a weekly meal plan with enough flexibility for leftovers or dinners out. From the meal plan, create a grocery list. Sticking to the list will not only keep your health on track, but also benefit your budget as well.

Prep on Shopping Day

When you come home with groceries, prepare what you can ahead of time. Recruit family or a friend to help chop fruits and vegetables, cook grains, trim meat, or pack snacks. Package prepped food in clear containers so you can easily see the contents and place meal items together in the refrigerator. Another plus - fewer messes throughout the week!

Have a Garbage Bowl

When prepping food, have one big bowl on the counter where you can throw all food scraps to minimize trips to the trash can.

Make Seasoning Packets

If you know you'll be using dried herbs or spices for recipes, create pre-measured seasoning packets so you can just pour and go. Label zip top baggies with the recipe name and store with other recipe ingredients.

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Choose Low-Effort Cooking Methods

Slow cookers, Instant Pots®, steamers, and microwaves all provide easy, low energy ways cook. When you're not feeling your best, try using one of these tools to get a healthy meal on the table without a lot of effort.

Cook Pasta in the Morning

It may sound crazy, but boiling pasta in the morning while doing other morning activities (brewing coffee, packing lunches, feeding the dog, etc.) doesn't add that much more work and saves time in the evening. Boil the pasta per package directions, drain the water, cover and place in the fridge until dinner time.

Look for Healthy Convenience Foods in the Grocery Store

Grocery stores are catering more and more to the convenience needs of their customers. Look for items like pre-chopped fruits and vegetables, steamable side dishes, shredded rotisserie chicken, bagged salads, jarred minced garlic, fresh herbs in tubes, or individually packaged, quick cooking frozen fish fillets. Keep your eyes open because there are always new products on the shelves.

Invest in Time Saving Tools

It's hard to save time prepping ahead if you're not using the right tools. Making the investment in a few basic tools will help you get the job done faster. Some key tools to have on hand include a sharp kitchen knife, a good vegetable peeler, flexible plastic cutting boards, and a metal egg slicer, which can be used to slice items like strawberries, kiwi and mushrooms. If you're really wanting to save time, include a food processor, stick blender and mandoline slicer in your arsenal of kitchen tools.

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Cook Once, Eat Twice

Make meals do double duty. Cook larger batches of what you're already planning on making and freeze half or portion out for lunches during the week. Cook several chicken breasts in the slow cooker, shred and use for a variety of meals, like BBQ pulled chicken sandwiches, chicken enchiladas, or chicken salad.

Grocery Store Dinner

If you just don't have the energy to make dinner, pop into your local grocery store and purchase a rotisserie chicken, a bagged salad and a loaf of whole grain bread. Dinner can be on the table in a snap.

Check Out Deliverable Meal Kits

If you want to take the guesswork out of dinner, try a meal kit delivery service. There are several options available and they often cater to different food tastes, family sizes, and eating patterns.
