



Kitchen Basics

Good food doesn't need to be complicated and you don't need a lot of fancy equipment but some items are essential to cook even simple recipes. Use this checklist to make sure you have cooking equipment ready that is clean, in good working order and easy to find.

The kitchen:

- A fridge with storage containers and cling film help food last longer and more safely. A small freezer allows for frozen ready meals to be delivered.
- A microwave is good for cooking and re-heating small portions and a simple microwave oven costs £20-30. No metal utensils can be used in a microwave but most plastic, glass and china can be used and low-cost special utensils like soup mugs, omelette makers etc are available.

and / or

- An oven and hob
- A kettle. If you live in a hard water area you may need to descale the kettle regularly.
- A clear work surface near the cooker. If cleaning up the whole kitchen or keeping it clean is difficult concentrate on one food preparation area with a chopping board or worktop protector. Disposable antibacterial wipes can help with a quick clean around.

sharp knife	1	measuring jug - pyrex	1
bread knife	1	small milk / sauce pan	1
wooden spoons	2	medium sized pan with a lid	1
spatula	1	frying pan – non stick	1
whisk or a fork	1	mixing bowl - small	1
serving spoon	1	ovenproof shallow dish	1
chopping board (1 meat / 1 veg)	2	ovenproof deep dish	1
oven gloves	1		
cutlery, crockery and glasses	1 full set per person minimum		
a serving tray or lap tray	1		

And don't forget the washing up! You will need a washing up bowl, a dishcloth, brush or scrub and some washing up liquid and a clean tea-towel.

Cooking:

- Finding your way around a stranger's kitchen isn't easy so you might want to make one or two cupboards and a drawer with all the things a carer may need easy to find and put away.
- Small size pans, cooking dishes and jugs make cooking single portions easier and they are lighter and safer to carry.
- Making a kitchen dementia friendly can help reduce stress about cooking and eating. Labelling cupboards, grouping items in a logical way, reducing clutter and making it easy to see things can all help but making radical changes can increase anxiety and frustration.
- Low vision can make cooking difficult and dangerous. Improved lighting, especially near the food preparation area and cooker can help. Aids and adaptations can make it easier to set the temperature or pour hot liquids.
- Poor mobility or balance, painful joints or weakened muscles can make opening jars and packets, lifting utensils and standing very difficult. Aids and adaptations in your kitchen can make everyday tasks easier and safer. Jar openers, easy grip utensils, kettle tippers, smaller and lighter utensils and perching stools or grab rails can keep you cooking.

The meal:

- Dirty, chipped or stained crockery is unhygienic and can put off a weak appetite. Smaller sized, clean and bright crockery helps set off the meal.
- Low vision, reduced grip and weakened muscles can make eating a slow and hard process. Easy grip cutlery, plates and bowls with a lip, eating with a spoon all aid independence. Contrasting food colour and crockery can help make food more visible.
- Remember being made to eat a long cold dinner when you were a child? Slow eaters or a long slow walk between the kitchen and dining table can mean meals are cold and unappetising. Plate warmers, thermal dishes and simple changes to mealtimes can all help make food more appetising.
- Making mealtimes special with a guest, a theme or just a little posy of flowers and a clean tray cloth can help make the moment special. Seasonal dishes, home-cooked items or a new flavour can help to kick-start the appetite.
- Make sure every meal and snack includes a drink. Dehydration increases the risk of a fall, affects dementia and delirium, and makes eating more difficult.



Having a regular or occasional sociable meal can make a big difference to feelings of loneliness and isolation and appetite. Free information about social eating in Derbyshire is available call Age UK Derby and Derbyshire's Advice Line on 01773 768240