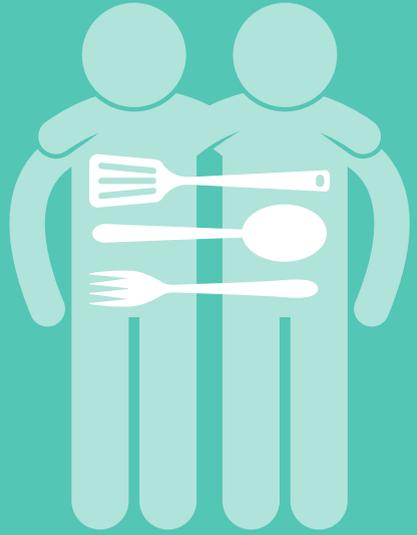


Helpful food tips



Getting the motivation
to cook

Reduced appetite

Preparing food

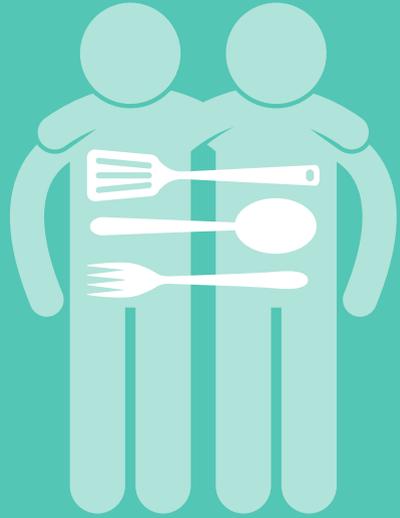
Safe storage of food

Encouraging someone
to eat





Quick Tips



Getting the motivation to cook

Most people sometimes feel that we can't be bothered cooking, and we can feel this way more often as we get older. Or sometimes we just get out of the habit of cooking. But cooking our own food is part of being well and having choices in our day-to-day life. So here are some ideas that have helped other people.

“Some days I just run out of energy by the middle of the afternoon. It feels too much effort to cook an evening meal.”

“It's nice to have something that is exactly what I like and know I made it, even when it is just for me.”

Have your cooked meal whenever you feel like cooking

- If you are a morning person and you have the most energy soon after getting up, why not have a cooked breakfast?

- You can prepare your dinner in the morning so you just need to reheat it in the evening.

- If it takes you time to get going and you are at your best later in the day, leave the food preparation until then.

- It is ok to have your main meal at lunchtime and a snack in the evening.

“I use a slow cooker – you put in all your ingredients in the morning and it will be ready in a few hours. That way you won’t need to do anything later, you just eat it when you are ready.”

“My arthritis means it takes me a couple of hours after I get up to loosen up enough to do stuff. I start making a nice lunch then.”

“I put porridge in my slow cooker at night and then I have a good start to my day, even though I would find it hard to cook that in the morning.”

Cook small things

Eating 5 or 6 small meals is as good as 3 main meals – and sometimes better.

- Try eating something every 2-3 hours – think of about a handful as the right portion size.

- Each small meal or snack could be one course of a traditional meal – a bowl of soup or a pudding.

- Cooking for one or 2 small meals may feel more manageable.

“Make something that you really enjoy cooking - the smells or the feel of the ingredients. That way it is a pleasure, not a chore.”

Keep food in the cupboard or freezer for when you don't fancy cooking

We all have days when we don't feel like cooking. Preparing in advance for these days can help make life easier.

- Try keeping ready meals, left overs or soup in the freezer (or tins in the cupboard) which can easily be defrosted and heated up.
- Also think about how to add to easy food, so it has enough goodness to be your meal. Examples are porridge and full fat milk, or adding some sweetcorn to tinned soup.
- You can freeze portions of something like chilli which will go with rice, or a baked potato, or pasta, or bread.
- There are meals and snacks that don't need any cooking at all. That way, you are still getting good nutrition without any bother. Examples are cheese with oatcakes or bread and tomatoes or salad, and hummus with carrot and celery sticks.

“Try not to use food like ready meals all the time. Mixing that with cooking some food yourself keeps your cooking skills alive.”

“Lentil soup with a roll one day, and then with crispy bacon and croutons the next day.”

Eat and cook with a friend

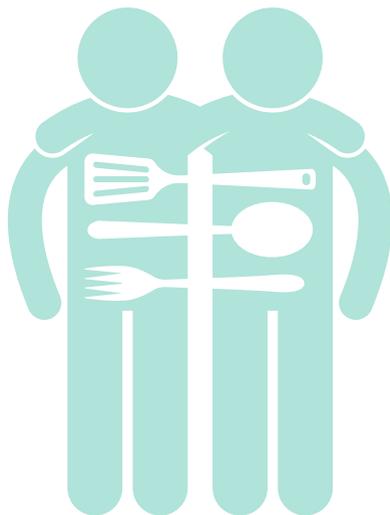
Eating with other people can help boost appetite and make meal times more enjoyable. It often feels easier to cook for someone else and cooking together can be enjoyable too.

- You can invite a friend over for lunch or dinner - maybe take turns to cook for each other
- You can meet each other at a lunch club or café.
- Get together and cook a bigger pot of soup or stew. Enjoy it that day and then each have a portion for next day or the freezer.

Have a list of some quick meals you enjoy

In order for this to work it has to either be something that's really easy to make one portion of, or something that you can use over a couple of days and it doesn't feel like you're eating the same stuff.

For example: you could make a chilli, with or without meat. It will last a few days in the fridge and will get tastier every day. You could have it with rice one day, as a baked potato topping the next day and with some pasta on day three.



Have fun with your food

Food doesn't have to be serious and you can come up with your own recipes. Our taste buds change as we get older, so it can be a good idea to try new flavour combinations or ways of cooking things.

Experimenting with food can be fun and you might just discover your new favourite thing!

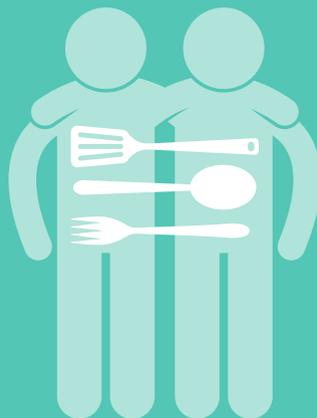


Quick Tips

Reduced appetite

Some people find that their appetite reduces as they get older. This can be a natural part of aging, as people tend to be less physically active and so need fewer calories. However, if our appetite is too small, it can make us tired, lose weight and not feel well. It is not good when this continues.

There can be many reasons why someone's appetite reduces. Some can affect any of us and some are specific to illnesses such as dementia - people living with dementia and their carers often find that a reduced appetite is a problem. These tips cover some frequent causes of reduced appetite and things that have worked for other people.



Things to try in any situation

Using all our senses.

When we are eating, we engage all 5 senses at the same time: taste, sight, hearing, touch and smell. If one of the senses is dulled or not working properly, it affects how we perceive the taste of the food we're eating.

- Having colourful food with different textures can help.
- Try adding a little bit of butter or olive oil to make food glossy.
- Try adding garnishes that give extra crunch and texture.
- Try a small sprinkling of sugar on savoury foods, just to get you started.
- Try foods that have distinctive smell that this person likes.

Get enough calories from small portions. If someone's appetite is really small, you want to get a good amount of energy from a small amount of food.

- Several small meals or snacks through the day can be easier to enjoy.
- It can help to have high calorie foods, such as full fat milk and butter or nuts.
- Try drinks like smoothies, as they can have good food content too.
- In some cases, a dietician can prescribe oral nutritional supplements, such as fortified drinks. They can be mixed in with your regular food.

Not getting enough exercise. The less active we are, the less food we need. Being active and especially being outside gives us an appetite.

- Aiming to be a little more active everyday can make a difference.
- Get some fresh air – going for a short walk round the garden or down the path, or sitting by an open window will help.
- Talk to a Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist if you are worried about someone falling if they are more active, as they can give good advice.

Changes to sense of smell and taste. As we get older our senses become less acute. Lots of health problems, such as having a cold or chest infection, will affect our sense of smell. Dementia can affect the senses and as a result food may not smell or taste the same to that person as it used to.

- Don't worry about foods not tasting the same. See it as an opportunity to try new foods and find what you do like.
- Try adding spices to the food to give it a stronger taste.
- Making meals colourful can also help as we eat with our eyes too!

Feeling low or depressed. Many aspects of not-so-good mental wellbeing and conditions such as depression and anxiety can make people uninterested in food or worried about eating.

- Speak to your GP as they will be able to tell you about a range of ways to improve your mental health and wellbeing.
- Spend time with other people and try to eat with them at least a few times each week.

- Getting fresh air and exercise and doing activities you enjoy are all good for your mental wellbeing and will help you have more of an appetite.

Having a painful mouth

We all need to be able to chew our food and a sore mouth, toothache or poorly fitted dentures may make eating painful. Missing teeth and not wearing dentures may also discourage someone from eating.

- People found that preparing foods so they aren't hard to chew or swallow or cutting the food into bite sized pieces helped.
- A dentist will be able to give you advice regarding teeth or dentures.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about mouth ulcers or anything that makes your mouth sore.

Chronic illness and medication

Some illness and/or medicines interact with food in a way that makes people not want to eat.

- Think about what has changed or is difficult – is

it when you eat at certain times, or do you find some food tastes odd? Keep a food diary for a few days, as that may help you work it out. Once you know what the problem is, it is easier to find ways to adjust to it.

- Some medicines make us constipated, and that reduces our appetite too. Try being more active, eating foods that are rich in fibre and drinking plenty of fluids.
- Speak to your GP as they may be able to change your medication to an alternative with fewer of the side effects that bother you.
- Ask about different combinations/timings of medication to lessen the side effects.

Being tired or worrying about things

We often don't feel like eating when we are too tired, or when we have something on our minds. And when we don't eat much it becomes even harder to have the energy to find a solution.

- If you are caring for someone, including someone with a reduced ...

appetite or other food difficulties, remember to take care of yourself! You need to be well and have energy to look after others.

- Being tired can be a symptom of health problems, so check this out with your GP.

- If you are worried about anything, speak to your friends and family or your GP. Try to find a way of making life a bit easier even if you cannot solve the problem.

- Eat with a friend. It can be something you do each week so it is something to look forward to.

- Ask someone else to do the cooking, or find foods that don't need much effort, even just for a short while until you are feeling better.

- Pamper yourself. Try the foods that you really like and don't worry about sensible diets for a short while.

Food Buddies Quick Tips

Food Buddies develops practical help for older people, people living with dementia and other people who sometimes have problems around food. We are trying to make life easier for people, staying safe and continuing to shop, cook and enjoy food. This guide has been brought together with older people and their friends and families who are sharing their experience to help other people. We hope it is also useful for volunteers and staff who support people.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us develop our Quick Tips.

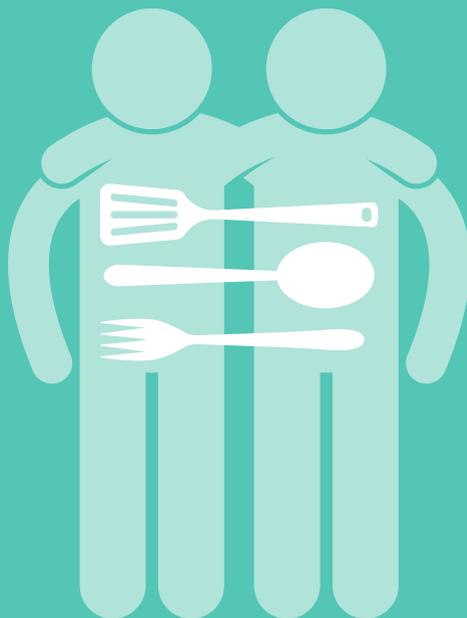
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For further information about Food Buddies, more tips and other useful sources of information, visit our website: www.otbds.org/projects/food-buddies



Quick Tips



Preparing food

Sometimes it can become difficult to prepare food as we get older. It can be because our eyesight is not as good, or we find it harder to grip things or stand for as long, or we find it harder to remember what comes next, or all sorts of other consequences of health problems.

The good news is that there are ways we can overcome most of these challenges. Here are some ideas of what worked for other people.

Kettles and teapots

Most of us enjoy a cup of tea or coffee every day. But lifting a heavy kettle full of boiling water can be tricky. Here are things you can try.

- Fill up your usual cup with cold water, put it in the kettle and if possible mark where the water level is with a permanent marker so you know in future how far to fill it up.
- Use a smaller, lightweight electric kettle – either one aimed at older people or a travel kettle.
- If you like to use a teapot, consider getting a 2 handled one, to make it easier to pour from.

Knobs on appliances

Sometimes it can be difficult to see the settings and where to turn knobs to on appliances like cookers and microwaves, and also things like washing machines. This is where bump-ons (self adhesive raised dots) or liquid plastic (it's like a glue, which sets hard) can be helpful. You apply them to mark the position you use most often and then you can feel if the knob is in the right place.

“When I could no longer see the little marks around the control knob for the oven, my son stuck some bump-ons for me. Now I use them everywhere, on the washing machine, hob and soup maker.”

Saucepans

Sometimes using a saucepan can be difficult – they get heavy, the handle can be tricky or painful to grip.

- Use a saucepan with handles on both sides as that way you can distribute the weight.
- It is also possible to get saucepans with angled handles, so your hand is in a more natural position when holding the pan.
- Try using a cooking basket if you are cooking something in boiling water. When the food is cooked you just remove the basket with the food in it from the water, with no need for draining and later when the water is cooled you can tip that away.
- Try a saucepan handle holder – these fix to the cooker with a suction foot and you can then stir a saucepan using only one hand.

Chopping and cutting

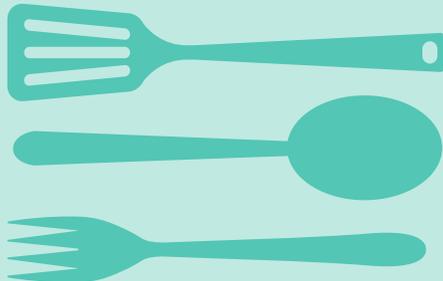
If you are having trouble with chopping or cutting, there are lots of different type of knives and adaptations you can try.

- Angled knives - these are useful if you have poor grip or restricted movement.
- Rocker knives - these work by using downward pressure to chop/cut food, making it possible to use with just one hand.
- Easy grip or contoured knives are also worth trying if you have difficulty holding a knife.
- Some people find an electric knife is easier.
- Scissors work for many types of food.

Or you could decide that instead of buying special equipment, you just won't chop food.

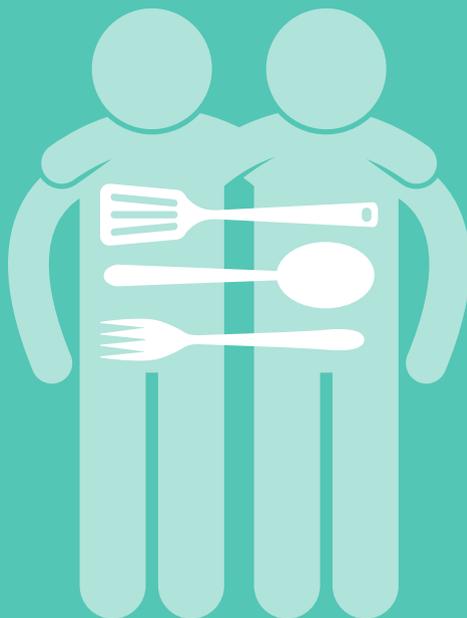
“I have different coloured scissors in the kitchen, the black ones I use only for food. It’s made such a difference, I can cut most things easily now.”

“I can’t chop safely anymore, so I now buy ready chopped vegetables. So easy and quick – I wish I’d found them years ago.”





Quick Tips



Safe storage of food

Storing food safely is good.

- It is easier to see what we have when the food is in the right place with clear labels.
- It keeps us well – we don't want to eat food that could make us ill.

Many people find this needs more effort as we get older.

- There is more food to store when it is only one person, or you are eating smaller amounts.

- It is harder to store food when people's eyesight is poorer or they find it harder to remember where they put things.
- Sometimes there are several other people in the kitchen too, such as family or care workers, so more chance of people not realising when food was opened or where it was stored.

These are our tips to make life easier.

Store foods in the right place

Keep an eye on the fridge:

- Raw foods, like vegetables, and foods that are ready to eat, like ready meals, should be kept in the fridge in separate containers.
- You should always keep raw meat on the bottom shelf of your fridge or in its own section, away from ready to eat food.
- You should keep eggs and dairy products, like butter and yoghurt, in the fridge.
- Don't keep open cans in the fridge. You can take out whatever was in the can and put it in a container or a bowl covered in cling film.

Look after cupboards:

- Get into the habit of checking labels on food packets to see which ones should be stored in the fridge; some are ok in the cupboard until they have been opened.
- Make sure you tightly seal up packs of dried foods, like rice and cereal, after you have opened them.

If you have transferred food into a container it can help to put a label, part of the packaging or even a picture on the outside of the container so you know what is in it without needing to open it. Adding the date is also useful so you know how long it has been there for.

Store foods for the right length of time

Unfortunately all food will go bad at some point, no matter how well you store it. Keep an eye on the 'Use By' or 'Best Before' dates on your food. Use up leftovers from the fridge within two days.

"I put a sticky label with the day I open things like a packet of cold meat. Then I know when my 2 days are up."

'Use by' dates are usually on foods that can go off quickly. It can be hard to throw away food if you feel like you're wasting it but eating foods past their use by date can make you ill.

'Best before' dates are usually printed on foods that are ok to eat for longer. They show how long the food will be at its best. But if a food ...

looks or smells off, don't eat it even if it is within its best before date.

Easy to see and open

Try clips for packets and plastic storage bags that are easier to use than the wee seals that come with the packets. There are bright coloured ones in many shops.

You can get clear plastic storage containers that have plastic flaps that fold down on each side. These are easy to open and close if you find it hard to grip things or don't like fiddly things.

Get containers that are in bright colours, or have coloured flaps, if it makes it easier for you to see them.

Temperature control

Having the right temperature in your fridge, freezer and larder (if you have one) is important for keeping different foods safe for you to eat. Bacteria will grow fastest when the temperature is between 5 and 63 degrees Celsius – and it's the bacteria that makes people unwell.

These tips will keep your food at a safe temperature:

- After buying chilled and frozen food get them in the fridge or freezer as quickly as you can.

- You can keep food at a safe temperature for several hours by using ice packs. They are handy for picnics and lunch boxes too.

- Use a thermometer so you can keep an eye on the temperature in your fridge and freezer; keep your fridge at 4 to 8 degrees Celsius and your freezer at -18C or below.

- Ready to eat foods can go off quickly if they are kept at room temperature.

- Be careful with your leftovers. Make sure they are cooled down and then put them in the fridge within 1-2 hours.

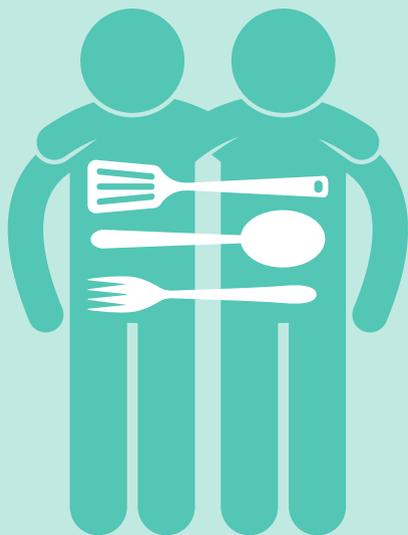
- If you have had any perishable foods out at room temperature for more than 4 hours it is safest to throw them away.

Cooking

- Making sure that food is properly cooked through is the best way to kill most of the bacteria that leads to food poisoning. Be especially careful when you cook meat. Make sure ...

...it is piping hot, there are no pink bits and any juices are running clear.

- When you reheat food make sure it is piping hot all over.
- There is more information about healthy eating and food safety advice from Food Standards Scotland and other sources on our website.



Food from other people

It is lovely when someone leaves food for you to eat later. But friends and relatives don't usually label food in the same way as food we buy from shops.

It can be hard to remember when you got something or what you are supposed to do with it.

Here are some suggestions:

- Ask the person to write the day and date you have to use it by on a label, along with how to heat it.
- Get them to put their name on a label. Then if you are not sure what to do, you can phone them and ask.
- Keep a set of sticky labels and a pen beside the door or beside the fridge and ask them to use that.



Quick Tips

Encouraging someone to eat

There are many reasons why someone may lose interest in eating and drinking, or turn down what they are offered. There are many factors that can reduce appetite.

- Not getting enough exercise.
- Changes to someone's sense of smell and taste.
- Feeling low or depressed.
- Having a painful mouth.
- Chronic illness and medication.
- Being tired or worrying about things.

Understanding why it happens

Physical problems: Some physical health problems such as tremors, dry mouth or swallowing problems can all affect someone's ability to eat and put people off eating. Speech and Language Therapists or Occupational Therapists can often help with lots of these issues so speak to the GP about a referral.

Finding it hard to say what you want:

Sometimes people living with dementia have difficulty communicating when they are hungry or what they would like to eat. This can make it hard for people who care about them to work out what they want.

Not recognising food: This is a particular concern for people living with dementia, as their sight can be affected and they may no longer recognise the food on their plate.

Where and when

Be led by the person on when they prefer to eat.

- Some people like a light lunch and larger evening meal. Others prefer a main meal in the middle of the day or a bigger breakfast.
- Many people find 5 or 6 small snacks during the day easier than a few bigger meals.
- If someone is awake for much of the night then night-time snacks may also be a good option for them.

Being involved in meals

Try eating together if the person enjoys company. Let people see and smell food when you are cooking. Many people find this helps their relative or friend as they can watch their facial expressions to work out what they would like to eat.

Try using photographs or pictures of food to help people to choose what they want and communicate. Some people find that talking about food they enjoyed when they were younger is a good way to get them interested and involved. Let the person choose where they sit and eat. And it's ok if the person wants to move about.

The right environment

Make the setting as appealing to the senses as possible. Sounds of cooking, smells from the kitchen, and familiar sights such as tablecloths with cutlery can all help to stimulate appetite.

Many people find it easier to eat when they are sitting upright at a table, rather than eating from their lap or a low table.

Keep the table free from clutter. Only have what you will need. Avoid patterned plates and tablecloths which make it harder to see what is on the table.

Have a good contrast between the table, the plate and the food, such as a white plate on a wooden table, or a green table cloth and a red plate with mashed potato.

A noisy environment can be distracting. Where you have chosen to eat should be calm and relaxing, so try having no television or radio. Some people find playing soothing music at mealtimes helps.

Have good lighting near the table.

How food is presented

When we are eating, we engage all 5 senses: taste, sight, hearing, touch and smell. If one of the senses is dulled or not working properly, it affects how we perceive the taste of the food we're eating.

- Having colourful food with different textures can help.

- Try adding a little bit of butter or olive oil to make food glossy.

- Add garnishes that give extra crunch and texture.

- Try a small sprinkling of sugar on savoury foods.

- Try foods that have a distinctive smell.

Try not to overload the plate with too much food. Some people find having just one of 2 foods on the plate at a time also helps.

It may also help to give the person a verbal description of the food.

Encourage the person to drink enough, even if that means they go to the bathroom more often, as that reduces other health problems.

- Diluted fruit juice and thicker drinks like smoothies can work well for someone who wants more colour and taste.
- Use smaller glasses or mugs that are easy to hold and not too heavy.

Making eating as easy as possible

If the person is having difficulty chewing or swallowing, try naturally soft food such as scrambled egg or stewed apple in the first instance, before considering puréed food.

By giving encouragement and gentle reminders to eat, and of what they are eating.

Try not to worry about mess - it's more important for the person to eat than to be tidy. Wipe clean mats and covers may help.

It's important the person doesn't feel rushed and they are given enough time to eat.

If food goes cold it will lose its appeal. Consider serving half portions to keep food warm or use a plate warmer or microwave to reheat food.

Get enough calories from small portions

If someone's appetite is really small, you want to get a good amount of energy from a small amount of food.

- It can help to have high calorie foods, such as full fat milk and butter or nuts.
- Ice cream can be easy to take and if you choose the right type will have good calories.
- In some cases, a dietician can prescribe oral nutritional supplements, such as fortified drinks.

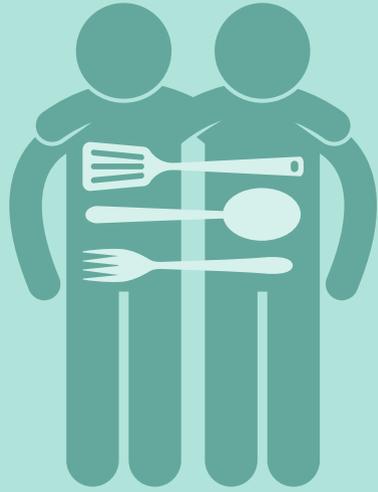
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Quick
Tips



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