

## **FROZEN MEALS**

**Can frozen meals help you eat better?** – Frozen meals can be helpful when there isn't enough time or motivation to prepare a home-cooked meal. A frozen meal would likely be better than an unhealthy snack, or no meal at all. Frozen meals may also be helpful if you can't stand for prolonged periods to prepare a meal because of back issues, surgery, vertigo, or other health issues. Frozen meals can also be a great way to add variety to your everyday routine.

**Can frozen meals fit into a healthy diet?** – Frozen meals have come a long way from the sodium & saturated-fat laden meals that once took up all the space on supermarket shelves. Today, there are more options available & healthier options too, however, high sodium content continues to be an issue with some frozen meals. See the list of recommendations below on how to choose healthier frozen meals, including those lower in sodium.

**What to look for when choosing frozen meals** – Most frozen meals lack a full serving of fruits or vegetables. Boost the nutrient value & fiber content by adding an additional serving of a fruit and/or vegetable to your meal. Also, consider adding a low-fat dairy source, providing a calcium, to help balance out the meal. Use the ***Nutrition Facts Label*** on packages to compare frozen meals & to help you make the healthiest choice.

**Meals on Wheels** – Each of the ***Meals on Wheels*** meals meets at least 1/3 of the Recommended Dietary Allowance for the population we serve. Meals are delivered hot Monday through Friday. We also offer a selection of frozen meals. **REGULAR** frozen meals are available, as well as therapeutic meals including – **PUREED** and **SOFT** meals for those with chewing or swallowing issues; **CARDIAC** meals for those following a doctor-advised sodium restricted diet; **CARB-CONTROLLED** for those on a diabetic diet; and **RENAL** meals for those requiring a kidney diet, or if on dialysis.

### **Recommendations for choosing a healthy frozen meal at the grocery store –**

- Select a meal with 350 – 500 calories to be considered “a meal.” Less calories or smaller meals may leave you feeling hungry.
- Select a meal containing whole grains, such as 100% whole wheat or multigrain pastas, brown rice, quinoa, barley, etc. Aim for a meal with 4 or more grams of fiber per serving.
- Limit unhealthy fats. Find entrees with less than 5 grams of saturated fat and 0 grams of trans-fat. Skip meals with cream sauces, gravies, or fried foods.
- The average person should consume no more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. Look for frozen meals that contain no more than 600 mg of sodium per serving.
- Get enough protein. Look for 14 – 21 grams of protein per serving. Choose leaner options such as fish, poultry, beans, tofu, edamame, and nuts.
- Add an additional vegetable or fruit to up the nutritional value of the meal.
- Check the serving size, as some meals may be considered 2 servings, versus just 1, and that means double the sodium.

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