



How to Approach Cooking Single Handedly with Physical Challenges

There are millions of people in the U.S. and around the world who have physical challenges that restrict any one or combination of abilities in

- Strength
- Range of motion
- Coordination
- Sensation
- Perception



Such challenges can and do affect the whole process of shopping, meal preparation, cooking and clean up. But, just how much such challenges affect the cook, depends on the following major factors:

- The person
- The place
- The task or tasks at hand

Understanding all three major factors can make the difference between independence and dependence, ability and disability. To face the challenge of cooking single handedly with physical disabilities, it is important to

- Be knowledgeable: (Know personal skills, abilities, the setting and equipment)
- Identify priorities
- Adjust

Be Knowledgeable

Step ONE: Know thy self.

1. Determine overall personal abilities in the following:

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| • balance | • push | • squat |
| • bend | • pull | • stoop |
| • carry | • reach | • smell |
| • climb | • release | • taste |
| • grasp | • sit | • walk |
| • hold | • stand | |
| • lift | • see | |

2. Rank level of ability in each of the above skills as follows:

- Able to do with some or a lot of difficulty
- Unable to do without the help of another person and/or device
- Unable to do at all

3. Study how the entire meal preparation and clean up process is approached.

- What makes tasks easier or harder to do?
- What makes tasks impossible?

Step TWO: Know thy cooking area and equipment

1. Determine what helps or hinders the cook during the cooking process

- Study the design of the kitchen area for
 - ✓ obstacles
 - ✓ barriers
 - ✓ hazards
 - ✓ things that seem to help
- Equipment used in meal preparation and cooking process
 - ✓ Does equipment help
 - ✓ Does equipment reduce abilities
 - ✓ Does equipment prevent abilities

2. Determine what *might* be useful to maximize abilities

Identify Priorities

Step THREE: Identify activities that

1. must be done to support basic need to eat and feed oneself
2. are important for daily life needs, but not essential.
3. would like to be done
4. could be eliminated

Adjustment

Step FOUR: Adjust to compensate

After steps one, two and three have been determined, step four leads to potential problem solving. To compensate for or circumvent challenges due to physical impairments, creativity and openness to change is necessary.

HINT: To cope with a physical challenge, begin by breaking down the challenging task into smaller parts.

Here are some ideas on how to approach problem solving with physical challenges.

1. Make adjustments to the cooking area

- a. re-arrange or re-organize to make meal preparation and clean up easier
- b. eliminate obstacles, hazards and barriers

2. Use equipment to aid abilities and safety such as

- a. protective aids
- b. warning devices
- c. guards to provide stability
- d. pressure relief
- e. assistive devices to make doing possible and increase independence

3. Change actions by first looking at

- a. how a task is done
- b. how often the task is done
- c. how long the task is done
- d. if a task has to be done
- e. can a task be done differently, and if so how
- f. why a task is difficult to do (see steps one, two and three above for help)