

A fact sheet about

Eating on the hard days

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Eating on the hard days

A practical guide for neurodivergent adults or parents.
Simple ways to eat on low-capacity days. How to speak up for food needs, your own or your child's.



For a lot of neurodivergent people, eating is not always simple. Low energy, executive function, sensory sensitivities and burnout can all make it harder. None of it is fussiness or laziness. It holds for Autistic and ADHD people, and for dyspraxia and sensory processing differences too. One idea helps more than most. Stop aiming for the ideal meal. Match what you eat to the energy you have.

Match food to your energy

When you have some energy. A good moment for something simple and warm. Eggs on toast, a sandwich, or reheating a batch you cooked earlier. Cooking a little extra now leaves an easy meal for a harder day.

When you have a little. Pick food that needs heating but not cooking. A frozen meal, something tinned, microwave rice or oats, or crackers and cheese. No-effort is not lazy, it is pacing.

When you have almost none. A drink or a single safe food is enough. A smoothie or milk. A snack you keep nearby. A food you can eat without thinking. On the hardest days, getting something in is the whole goal.

Speak up about food

When eating somewhere is hard, it is reasonable to ask for something that works better. That holds for you at work, or for your child at school. The problem might be a food rule, the timing, or the room itself. A calm, specific request usually works best.

Be specific about what is hard. Name the exact problem, and what would help instead. A concrete ask is far easier for a school or workplace to act on. A general worry is harder, so start with the change you want.

Ask in writing. A short message alongside any chat gives everyone the same record. It shows what you asked for, and what came back. It is reasonable to expect a reply.

Bring people in if it stalls. You are not on your own with this. A support person or advocate can help you put it into words. If the first conversation changes nothing, you can take it to someone more senior.

Make your own easy-meal shortlist

The most useful list is the one in your own words. Have it ready for a day when deciding feels like too much. Fill it in on a good day. Keep it on the fridge or your phone, and let it choose for you.

My easy-meal shortlist

Something I can grab with zero prep:

Something warm I can heat in minutes:

A drink for when food feels like too much:

A comfort food I keep stocked for hard days:

A go-to for when mornings are rough:

There is no wrong answer on this list. If it feeds you on a hard day, it belongs.



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Understanding Zoe is the first neuroaffirming AI-powered app
that turns every report, observation and moment into an
actionable next step, supporting neurodivergent people and
those who care about them to thrive.

for more information, you can contact
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