According to the National Council on Aging, 17 million Americans, approximately 1 in 3, who are 65 and older are economically insecure. Low-income and possibly poorly mobile seniors depend on supplemental food services. These services could be provided by local outreach groups or through state and federal assistance. Meal delivery services are options for senior citizens with the means to afford them who may prefer to have prepared meals or ingredients delivered for their convenience. Let's see how it works.

Meal delivery for aging adults

Aging adults may encounter many challenges in their day-to-day lives. A common problem for seniors is their **decreased ability to perform everyday tasks like cooking and housekeeping**. Grocery shopping may become too strenuous, or they don’t have safe and accessible transportation.

Home-delivered meals are a logical solution for older adults with mobility or endurance problems. Mobility issues may result from aging and degenerative conditions, chronic illness, or diseases that impact energy levels following daily activities.

> "Chronic diseases that limit mobility include type 2 diabetes, heart or cardiovascular disease, or arthritis. These factors can increase a senior's risk of falling by going to the grocery store or even preparing a meal at home.

> Researchers involved with The National Institute of Health report, "Nutrition and diets play a central part in the development of several age-related diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, neurodegenerative disease and dementia. A well-managed nutrition and a diet adapted to age is essential to maintain mental freshness and a good quality of life at old age". "

This means if seniors are consuming healthy meals, they are more likely to be healthier for longer and improve their means to age in place. Providing solutions for aging adults to eat nutritious meals in a safe environment may be as simple as using a **meal delivery service**. The process may seem complex, and thus, a question may arise: how do you get started finding and ordering meal services for seniors?

How do you find these services?

A phone call to your **local or state office on aging** can help determine if you are eligible for free services. The process usually begins with an application or a referral from social services

or your physician. Many services require you to be an adult over 60 who has problems moving around safely and cannot attend congregate or communal meals.

The process starts with filling out an on online application, or one provided by an area agency on aging, or it can be completed over a phone call. A social worker will contact you to complete the assessment, and if you qualify they will begin your meal services.

Meal delivery programs for low-income seniors require certain criteria to be eligible. Low-income aging adults may qualify for free meal delivery or pay for their meals on a sliding scale based on income. The priority leans toward those with greater economic or social needs, living in rural areas, and minority groups due to their incidence of being placed in an institution rather than aging in place.

What senior meal delivery services are available?

Since the pandemic began, food delivery service options have grown significantly. An internet search on a topic like 'meal delivery near me' will yield numerous results for **food delivery companies** and **virtual applications** (apps). However, they may not be senior-friendly because of price, technology skillset, type of food offered, or delivery limitations.

For seniors whose budgets allow but are possibly lacking mobility or have transportation issues, meal delivery can be as convenient as **ordering from a restaurant** using a delivery

app like DoorDash, GrubHub, or Uber Eats. **Ordering from a grocery or market app** allows you to pick the food you want to prepare your meals without going to the store. Another option is using meal kit services, such as Hello Fresh or Hungry Root, which provide all the ingredients and instructions to make your meal.

Some services are **geared more toward seniors** specifically. BistroMD offers a doctor-approved menu, and Mom's Meals are designed by dieticians. Both are senior-friendly, offering those with medically restrictive diets meal options, including low-sodium, heart-healthy, and diabetic-friendly.

BistroMD's weekly meal plans are priced about the same as a week's worth of groceries, but the meals arrive prepared and ready to warm up. Mom's Meals offers a budget-friendly per-meal cost and a financial offset for seniors who meet certain criteria.

Cost comparisons for senior meal services

Food delivery services using an app have delivery fees and additional service fees that may range from $0.60 to over $3 or be a percentage of the total amount. Purchasing a subscription for the food app may be a wise choice if you plan to use it frequently, with the average fee being $10. This form of meal delivery could get expensive for a senior on a budget.

Meal kit delivery services range from $8 to $28 per meal or serving, depending on the

company, plus the cost of shipping. The bonus is that many provide two servings per meal and may offer an introductory discount. They can be customized for a variety of diet specialties, such as gluten-free, plant-based, or low-calorie, but you prepare and cook the meal with their ingredients and recipes.

If you are a low-income, chronically ill, or disabled senior and have medically restricted dietary needs, it would be worth a phone call to determine if you are **eligible for assistance**. It's been reported that less than half of eligible seniors use supplemental nutritional assistance programs (SNAP). Remember, some older adult services are also available on a sliding scale based on income, so educate yourself or your loved ones for the best possible outcomes.

Choosing meal delivery for the elderly

The options for meal delivery grow annually, but which services offer the best for seniors? There are several factors to consider when choosing a meal delivery service for elderly loved ones. Be honest with yourself or your aging loved ones and ask questions about your requirements from a delivery service.

They may have medical issues or a chronic disease that requires dietary management or restrictions. For example, their medical provider may advise a low-salt or low-sugar diet, therefore, the meal service choice should be based on their specialty offerings for those issues.

Here are some tips for selecting the right meal delivery plan for elderly loved ones:

- Does the individual have **dietary restrictions or requirements** for medical reasons? If so, choose a service able to meet those needs.
- What is the **food budget** for this person based on their income? Are they able to afford a paid service, or is financially assisted delivery needed?
- Does this individual have **health issues limiting mobility**, endurance, or safety required to prepare a meal? Consider functional ability and if they can lift a large container full of weekly meals. If unable to prepare food or move well, choose an already assembled daily meal service, not a meal kit delivery.

Help for seniors on a budget

Community-inspired groups and **government assistance programs** offer help to low-income and food-insecure seniors. A web search inquiry or phone call can determine your eligibility. These services are great for seniors on a budget. Unfortunately, many who qualify do not partake in these services.

The Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Program provides grants to states throughout the U.S. that support nutrition services for adults 60 years and older. These grants fund local programs, providing meals to homebound seniors and also gathering places offering community services.

Meals on Wheels has become a mainstay in community meal delivery since its start in the mid-1950s. It receives some funding from the OAA but also through donations. Meals on Wheels volunteers offer social interaction and are trained to notice potential safety or health concerns when delivering meals.

The importance of meals for seniors

The current statistics demonstrate the importance and continued need for accessible senior meal delivery services. Access to nutritional food and being able to cook independently are concerning problems for millions of seniors in the United States.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports, "**Food insecurity increased to 9.1% in 2022** from 6.9% in 2020 in American households with adults 65 and older".

Improving food security is only one positive aspect of meal delivery for seniors. Being a homebound older person can have other health and wellness repercussions. Researchers report evidence that a **daily or weekly visit from a person delivering a meal can improve a senior's well-being**. 85% of seniors receiving home-delivered meals reported feeling safer because of that delivery visit.

Here are four meal delivery benefits for aging adults:

1. **Nutritionally balanced meals** are provided, which has positive health impacts. Research

indicates a potential decrease in healthcare costs related to undernutrition or malnutrition when meal services are factored in.

2. **Improved safety** since they do not have to travel outside the home to acquire groceries. Already prepared meals assist those unable to safely prepare and cook meals.
3. **Retains quality of life** levels by being able to age in place while maintaining some independence. Aging-in-place involves seniors who continue to live in their homes and communities with family or friends instead of a senior facility.
4. **Reduced feelings of loneliness** and improved mental well-being. A meal delivery person may be the only personal contact an older person has that day or week. Social connection or interaction is essential for mental well-being.

Senior meal delivery begins with asking questions about their personal needs. The next step should be to consult an aging expert and discuss your meal requirements and options. A variety of services are available depending on your nutritional needs and income. Meal delivery for the elderly provides positive outcomes by supporting an aging-in-place plan while maintaining independence and a better quality of life.

FAQ

Which meal delivery service is best for seniors?

The most used meal delivery service for seniors is Meals On Wheels. The best service depends on their individual needs. There are a variety of services available, including delivery apps, meal kits, or prepared meals that offer customizable options to meet senior's nutrition and budget needs.

What factors should you consider when choosing a meal service for the elderly?

Consider the senior's **nutritional requirements, ability and mobility to prepare food,** and **budget** when choosing a meal delivery service. Specialized diets and low-income seniors may have other options besides paid delivery services. Consult your local office on aging for assistance.

Are there specialized meal options for the elderly with dietary restrictions?

There are delivery services that offer specialized meal plans for seniors with dietary restrictions. Some of these services may be free if you are eligible. Otherwise, some paid services offer meal plans designed by

registered dieticians or are doctor-approved which may meet your specific nutritional needs.

Who qualifies for free senior meal delivery service?

Aging adults who are low-income, have mobility issues, or have chronic illnesses may meet the criteria required for free meal delivery. Contact your local office on aging for more information and to receive an assessment.

Why is nutrition important in meal delivery for aging adults?

The elderly are more likely to experience poor access to nutritious food and be undernourished for a variety of reasons. Chronic illness and lower incomes are common for senior citizens in the U.S. Meal delivery services offering nutritionally balanced food may improve health outcomes for seniors.

Key takeaways:

Senior meal delivery can improve health and well-being markers such as better nutrition access and social interaction.

When choosing a delivery service, it is essential to consider your personal needs: budget allowance, mobility

and ability to prepare, or dietary requirements/restrictions.

A variety of options are available for all income levels and dietary needs including senior specific meals programs from meal kit services and community supported free meals.

Educate yourself and utilize the available nutritional assistance programs. Ask questions of your health providers, community services, and even friends about what is available to improve or support your nutritional needs.

Resources:

1. Nutrition services.
2. Food insecurity in U.S. households with older adults increased in 2022.
3. Get the facts on economic security for seniors.
4. Delivering so much more than just a meal.
5. Health economic benefits from optimized meal services to older adults-a literature-based synthesis.
