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Smart Kitchens: Help from Assistive Technology

The kitchen can sometimes be a challenging place to work—and I have experienced this firsthand. As a left-handed person, I often notice that common kitchen tools such as vegetable peelers, soup ladles, and scissors are designed primarily for right-handed users. In much the same way as we get older, the kitchen tools we once relied on may no longer work as well as they used to. When that happens, it might be time to replace worn-out or hard-to-use utensils with items that work better—and smarter—for our needs.

Physical tasks such as chopping, lifting cookware, or opening jars can become difficult due to arthritis, decreased strength, or limited dexterity. Fortunately, adaptive kitchen tools can significantly reduce strain and fatigue. Items such as electric can openers, rocker knives, lightweight cookware, and pull-down shelving are designed to make everyday cooking tasks easier and safer.

For individuals experiencing reduced mobility, dexterity challenges, or vision loss, K-State Research and Extension's Meadowlark District offers assistive technology kitchen kits that you can view for ideas to use in your own kitchen. These kits are designed to help make preparing home-cooked meals easier, safer, and more enjoyable. No matter your age or whether you have a disability, there are tools available that can support independence and confidence in the kitchen.

Examples of Items Included in the Kitchen Kit

Below are just a few examples of what you will find in the assistive technology kitchen kit. We invite you to stop by one of our offices to see the full kit in person.

- **Battery-Operated Jar and Bottle Openers**
Ideal for anyone, but especially helpful for people with limited hand strength or for one-handed users.
- **Large-Print Measuring Cups and Spoons**
These feature clear, bold numbers with a contrasting background, making them a great aid for individuals with reduced vision who need to measure ingredients accurately for cooking and baking.
- **Rocker Knife with Silicone Grip**
Designed to ease chopping and cutting, this knife is especially useful for one-handed users or those with reduced hand strength. The stainless steel blade is dishwasher safe.
- **Dycem® Non-Slip Mat**
Dycem is a versatile, antimicrobial, non-slip mat that helps keep items secure without being sticky. Use it under plates, bowls, cups, or cutting boards to prevent slipping and spills. Dycem is easy to clean, latex-free, and non-toxic, making it ideal for kitchens or anywhere extra stability is needed.
- **Foam Grip Tubing**
Foam grip tubing can be added to writing utensils, toothbrushes, razors, silverware, and other kitchen tools to improve comfort and control. The tubing is easy to clean, can be cut to size, and is especially helpful for individuals with weaker hands, arthritis, or those who need a wider grip.

Cooking with Confidence

There is a wide variety of assistive technology tools available that can help make cooking activities safer and more manageable. For many older adults, the result is simple yet powerful: the ability to prepare meals on their own terms, in a kitchen that feels familiar, comfortable, and safe.

For more information about kitchen assistive technology or to view the Meadowlark District kitchen kits, contact our office at **785-364-4125** or email thatfield@ksu.edu.