
Susceptible To Poor Nutrition

For Some Seniors, Eating Can Be Too Much Trouble

At any age, keeping up with the necessary nutritional requirements can be difficult and confusing. However, as seniors grow older, some may be faced with additional challenges that can interfere with their ability to prepare and eat nutritious meals.

Losing a spouse can make their mealtimes very difficult. A Journals of Gerontology study (1993) found that many widows who used to enjoy cooking and eating, now found these things a "chore" because they had no one to share them with. The study also found that many widowers were not prepared to plan and cook nutritious meals.

Seniors with chronic medical conditions requiring special diets can find it much tougher to prepare meals. And those with disabilities may also find that eating is way too much trouble.



Even if seniors eat a diet high in nutritional value, medical problems may prevent the absorption of the important nutrients.

SOME WARNING SIGNS OF SENIORS AT RISK

Nutritional problems can sneak up on seniors. So it's important for caregivers to watch for "red flags". Here's a list of some of the things to look out for. If you do suspect a senior suffering from poor nutrition, please consult their doctor.

- ◆ **Skipping meals & eating less.** - *"I'm not really hungry."* With age, digestive tolerance for certain foods and spices may change. Dental issues, swallowing difficulties and chewing problems can make eating more difficult. Loneliness and depression can take away the incentive to eat. Medications can also have a negative affect on appetite.
- ◆ **Complains of lack of taste and smell.** - *"This onion doesn't smell very strong."* It's normal for seniors to lose some of their sense of smell and taste. And certain medications can magnify the losses. These problems can take away some of the desire to eat.
- ◆ **A noticeable loss of weight.** - If you don't pick up on the first two points, a sudden drop in weight is a visual signal that poor nutrition may be an issue.
- ◆ **Constipation.** - Digestive problems affect nutritional absorption. The diet may lack enough fruits and vegetables. Water intake may be low. Or medications may be to blame.
- ◆ **Problems with mobility or dexterity.** - *"I couldn't get to the store this week."* Physical disabilities can make it more difficult to go shopping and prepare meals. Difficulty handling utensils may make eating more frustrating and less enjoyable.
- ◆ **Not as active or complains of low energy.** - *"I don't feel like doing that anymore."* Passing up on things they always loved to do can be a result of low energy. When nutrition is poor, activity drops along with the energy level.

(Sources: FDA, Howtocare.com)



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