

# UNINTENTIONAL WEIGHT LOSS

## *Some Seniors Have Difficulty Keeping On The Pounds*

In conversation, when someone brings up the issue of body weight, the topic generally centers around "too much" and diets. However, when discussing the weight of seniors, the topic can often swing around to "too little" and "I'm concerned." That's because unintentional weight loss is a noticeable condition/symptom that may appear with age.

Body weight is a result of caloric intake, absorption of nutrients, age, overall health, and other factors. Once middle adulthood is reached, the readout on the home scale should be pretty consistent. When you lose pounds for no reason, heed the warning and see your doctor.

How much unintentional weight loss should bring on concern. There is no clear consensus on this, and certainly individual situations have to be considered. However, a common definition of clinically important weight loss is 5% over 6-12 months time.



*When exercising to add or maintain weight, work within your abilities. Frail seniors can lift soup cans instead of barbells and can work out while sitting in a chair.*

## STATISTICS

- ◆ Body weight tends to peak in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> decade of life, then remain stable until 65-70 years of age. Then weight typically lowers at a very slow rate, between .22-.44 lbs/yr.
- ◆ Weight loss can be as high as 27% in high risk groups, such as the frail elderly living independently and receiving community services.
- ◆ Weight loss of more than 20% is associated with pronounced organ dysfunction.
- ◆ Food intake tends to decline with age. In one study, men from ages 64 to 91 reported a decrease of 25.1 kcal/day (kilogram-calorie). Women in the same category reported a decrease of 19.3 kcal/day.
  - ➔ The loss of weight-maintaining calories (over 20-30 years time), creates an average loss in energy intake of 25%. This drain on energy can lead to less muscle-building activity.

## CAUSES

Unexplained weight loss can result from a variety of physical, mental and emotional causes. Here are some common culprits.

- ◆ Age-related changes in appetite.
- ◆ Changes in activity and/or diet.
- ◆ Gastrointestinal problems. These include Crohn's disease, peptic ulcers and colitis.
- ◆ Medications and their side effects.
- ◆ Mental health changes and issues. These include depression, anxiety and stress.
- ◆ Cancer and the treatment of cancer.
- ◆ Neurologic illnesses. These include strokes, dementia and Parkinson's disease.
- ◆ Hormonal disorders. These include diabetes, hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism.
- ◆ Kidney disease.
- ◆ Cardiovascular and lung diseases.

(Sources: American Geriatric Society, MayoClinic.com)



### Keepsake Companions

Improving Lives, One Household At A Time

[www.KeepsakeCompanions.com](http://www.KeepsakeCompanions.com)

**(800) 505-1730**

Suite 11  
7128 Miramar Rd.,  
San Diego, CA 92121