

*The Comfort of Home®*

# Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS"

## Good Nutrition for Healthy Body & Mind

### Special Needs and Considerations

Bringing good nutrition to the table takes planning, attention, and some imagination. A foundation for healthy eating can be found in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's [www.myPyramid.gov](http://www.myPyramid.gov). Making smart choices from each part of the pyramid is the best way to ensure one's body gets the balanced nutrition it needs.

Good nutrition is necessary for everyone, but sometimes things can get in the way of eating right. Ask the nurse, doctor, or pharmacist if any of the medications the person in your care is taking have possible side effects that can interfere with appetite or affect the absorption of important vitamins and minerals.

**Changes in mobility.** If eating habits remain the same while activity drops off, **weight gain** can result. Added weight can increase fatigue, further limit mobility, put a strain on the respiratory and circulatory systems (lungs, heart, blood, blood vessels), and increase the risk of other chronic illnesses. A registered dietitian can recommend an ideal weight and reasonable daily calorie intake.

Inadequate physical activity and lack of weight-bearing exercise can result from changes in mobility that can contribute to the risk of developing **osteoporosis**—a condition where bones can become thin and fragile. While building strong bones starts early in childhood, keeping them healthy as we grow older requires attention and care.

### Make the Most of Every Food Group:

- ♥ **Focus on fruits.** Select fresh or frozen over juices.
- ♥ **Vary your vegetables.** Choose from a rainbow of colors.



- ♥ **Make half your grains whole.** The grains listed on the ingredient list should be "whole" since they provide a great source of fiber and can help manage weight and control constipation.
- ♥ **Keep it lean.** Choose lean meats, fish, and poultry and bake, broil, or grill whenever possible. Vary protein choices by adding beans, peas, lentils, nuts, and seeds.
- ♥ **Calcium counts.** Include 3 cups of low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, or equivalent of low-fat cheeses every day to maintain good bone health. Calcium-fortified foods and beverages can help fill the gap if you don't or can't consume milk.
- ♥ **Limit your fat, sugar, and salt.** Look for foods low in saturated and trans fats. Sugar adds calories and no nutritional value. Choose and prepare foods with little salt or sodium.

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**Eating and emotions.** Depression can affect appetite in different ways. Many people turn to certain foods for comfort when they are depressed. These may be old favorites from childhood—a scoop of mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, a bowl of rice pudding. The danger is in overdoing it. These foods are often high in fat, sugar, and calories that can easily add up. On the other hand, some people lose their appetite when they are depressed. Eating with others can help you and the person in your care stay connected. Remember also that being physically active can help decrease the symptoms of depression.

**Bladder problems.** Quite often, fear of having to go to the bathroom frequently or loss of bladder control causes a person to limit fluids. This can cause other problems such as **dehydration**, dry mouth, difficulty swallowing, loss of appetite, and constipation. If the doctor approves, find ways to fit extra fluids into the diet.

- Take water breaks during the day.
- Have a beverage with meals.
- Travel with your own personal supply of bottled water.



**Bowel management** often involves preventing constipation. Fiber is found in cereal, grains, nuts, seeds, vegetables, and fruit. It is not completely digested (broken down) or absorbed (taken in) by the body. A diet rich in fiber (about 25 to 30 grams each day) along with adequate fluid intake and physical activity can help promote good bowel function. Fiber provides a sense of fullness, which helps reduce how much one eats.

## Eating and Alzheimer's Disease

The ability of a person with AD to make good food choices, to use utensils correctly, to chew and swallow his food, and to sit at the table changes over the course of the illness. As with other activities of daily living, people with AD need more and more help as time passes.

**Allow plenty of time for each meal**—a minimum of 30–45 minutes.

In the early stage you may not need to do anything special when preparing food, but may need to help choose a healthy diet. In middle stage AD, they may eat only food that is unhealthy or is unsuitable for any medical conditions they may have. Keep items that are good for the person to eat readily available. When offering food, don't clutter the plate. Cut food into bite-size pieces. If the person wants to eat with his fingers, try not to be critical and offer finger food. Be aware that people in this stage may add too much salt or pepper to their food by mistake or put sugar rather than salt on a hamburger. It may be best to keep these condiments out of reach.

## Taking Care of Yourself— Exercise as Part of Life

Physical activity and good nutrition are perfect partners in good health. Together they help in managing weight and providing energy. Physical activity not only burns calories, but it can also help you and the person in your care by:

- Making the most of muscle strength, or even building strength.
- Slowly increasing the ability to do more for longer periods of time.
- Increasing range of motion and joint flexibility (the ability to move easily).
- Strengthening the heart.
- Decreasing fatigue.
- Decreasing symptoms of depression.
- Maintaining regular bowel and bladder functions.
- Cutting down on the risk of skin breakdown and irritation.
- Protecting weight-bearing bone mass (spine, hips, legs).

### Inspiration

*Self-love is the only weight loss aid that really works in the long run.*

~Jenny Craig

## Live Life Laughing!

Yum! No salt, no fat and without the sawdust taste!



## Resource for You

### Meals on Wheels

The person in your care may be eligible for Meals on Wheels, a nationwide program that delivers prepared meals to seniors. The qualifications vary from program to program.

To find the closest program to you, contact:

**Meals on Wheels**

**703-548-5558**

**[www.mowaa.org](http://www.mowaa.org)**

**[Mowaa@mowaa.org](mailto:Mowaa@mowaa.org)**

or contact your local Area Agency on Aging or Visiting Nurses Association.

## The Comfort of Home®

### Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

### Ordering Info

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*The Comfort of Home®*  
Caregiver Series

#### available from...

CareTrust Publications LLC  
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800-565-1533  
or [www.comfortofhome.com](http://www.comfortofhome.com)

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## Tips for Better Nutrition

- \* Five to six **smaller mini-meals throughout the day** may be easier to manage and help keep energy levels high. Choose items that provide the nutrition the person in your care needs for good health and watch those that provide little to the diet except calories. Some healthful choices can include reduced-fat cheese sticks, nuts and nut butter, fresh or dried fruit, hardboiled eggs, low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese, bagged salads, and cut raw vegetables.



- \* **Keep meal preparation simple.** Rely on quick-cooking grains, easy-to-heat veggies and a whole-grain roll for side dishes. Save energy by collecting all the ingredients and cooking utensils first and sit down at the counter or table to put it all together.
- \* When you cook, **make more than is needed** for one meal. Store or freeze the rest in oven- or microwave-ready containers for quick reheating.
- \* Save menus from places that deliver *healthy* meals.

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

Poor nutrition can affect a person's body and mind. Providing good nutrition takes planning and attention. Test your knowledge by answering True or False to the questions below.

1. Medications the person in your care is taking can have possible side effects that can interfere with appetite or affect the absorption of important vitamins and minerals.  
T F
2. Added weight can increase fatigue, further limit mobility, put a strain on the respiratory and circulatory systems (lungs, heart, blood, blood vessels), and increase the risk of other chronic illnesses.  
T F
3. Osteoporosis is a condition where bones can become thin and fragile.  
T F
4. Weight gain can result if eating habits remain the same while activity decreases.  
T F
5. Five to six smaller mini-meals throughout the day may be easier to manage and help keep energy levels high.  
T F
6. Depression does not affect a person's appetite.  
T F
7. Limiting fluids can cause problems such as dehydration, dry mouth, difficulty swallowing, loss of appetite, and constipation.  
T F
8. The ability of a person with Alzheimer's disease to make good food choices, to use utensils correctly, to chew and swallow his food, and to sit at the table changes over the course of the illness.  
T F
9. No need to provide extra time for meals for a person with Alzheimer's disease.  
T F
10. For good nutrition, limit fat, sugar and salt (sodium).  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_