



Nutrition for Older Adults: Social and Emotional Changes and Nutrition

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Social Changes

Loneliness is a common problem for many older adults. Retirement and loss of family and friends can lead to loneliness.

Loneliness is not just related to living alone.

- Lack of frequent communication may be more important than being alone.
- Someone who lives with others, but does not have frequent communication, may be lonelier than someone who lives alone and has frequent communication.

Loneliness can affect food intake by causing:

- Loss of appetite.
- Decreased desire to cook and eat.

Loneliness can also lead to poor eating habits:

- Eating the same foods.
- Snacking instead of eating meals.
- Eating easily prepared foods.

Emotional Changes

Although not a problem for all, depression is a problem for many older adults.

- Loneliness, retirement, and loss of family and friends can cause depression.
- Some medicines and some nutrition deficiencies can also cause symptoms of depression.

Depression can also affect food intake by causing:

- Loss of appetite.
- Decreased desire to grocery shop, cook or even eat.

Tips if Social and Emotional Changes Affect Food Intake

- Ask friends or family over for meals.
- Ask friends and family to eat out.
- Senior meal sites provide a place to eat with others.

- Some medicines can cause depression. Check with your doctor about the medicines you use.

Tips for Caregivers if Social and Emotional and Changes Affect Food Intake

- Serve food so it looks pleasing. Food tastes better if it looks good to eat.
- Meals with a variety of food flavors, colors, temperatures and textures are more pleasing.

- Don't serve the same foods day after day.
- Make the setting pleasant. Try colorful tablecloths, placemats or trays, music or a centerpiece.
- Have older adults help plan and prepare meals.
- Help older adults to get involved in other activities to increase feelings of worth.
- Watch for signs of loneliness and depression.

Sources

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