



Nutrition for Older Adults: Factors Which Affect Food Intake

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Factors Which Affect Food Intake

Good nutrition can help keep the body healthy. However, many factors can affect older adults' ability or desire to grocery shop, cook or eat.

Physical Factors

Muscle mass tends to decrease with age. This can result in lower strength, energy, mobility and balance. This can make grocery shopping, cooking and even eating difficult.

Bone mass tends to decline with age. This can lower mobility and increase fracture risk. It can also affect grocery shopping and cooking.

Joint problems, such as arthritis, are a problem for many older adults. Joint problems can hinder grocery shopping, cooking and eating.

Vision tends to decline with age. This can make grocery shopping and cooking harder.

Taste and smell tend to decline with age. Foods may not taste the same causing lower food intake.

Saliva tends to decrease with age. Foods may be dry and difficult to swallow which can lower food intake.

Tooth and mouth problems can make chewing and swallowing difficult. These can lower food appeal.

Digestion changes occur with age. This can cause digestion problems or food intolerances. This can lower food appeal.

Intestinal motility tends to decline with age. Along with low fluid and fiber intake, this can result in constipation. This can lower food appeal.

Social Factors

Loss of social contact is a problem for many older adults. Retirement and loss of family and friends can lead to loneliness. Lack of communication can be more important than living alone.

Loneliness can lead to lower interest in shopping, cooking and eating. This can lead to poor eating habits.

Emotional Factors

Although not a problem for all, depression is a problem for many older adults. Loss of social contact, retirement, and loss of family and friends can cause depression. Some medicines can also cause depression.

Depression can also lead to lack of interest in shopping, cooking and eating. This can result in a poor diet.

Medication Factors

Medicines can lower appetite in several ways. Some medicines can cause nausea. Some can affect taste. Some can cause depression.

Money Factors

Many older adults have limited funds. This can result in less money for food or transportation to shop. Limited funds can result in moving into housing with less space for storing and cooking food. This may affect the quality of food choices.

Sources

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