Tips to Informal Caregivers
on Giving Personal Care

Importance of Food Nutrition

Adequate nutrition is basic to maintain good health. A well-balanced diet is necessary for growth and normal body functioning. A person with good eating habits who is well nourished will have the energy to carry on life's activities. Good nutrition is especially important in the care of the ill and aged in:

- maintaining good muscles;
- promoting wound healing, and recovery from the stress of illness.

A doctor should detail the special nutritional needs of the patient. The following describes the nutrients required for good nutrition.

- Carbohydrates are an important food for calories needed to keep the body functioning and for energy in order to carry on daily activities. Complex carbohydrates, found in potatoes, bread, cereal, rice, spaghetti and similar foods are especially desirable. Simple carbohydrates, such as found in sugar, syrups, and jelly are less desirable.
- Proteins play a major role in growth and in the replacement of bodily tissue. They can be broken down for energy when needed. Proteins are found in meats, fish, fowl, eggs, soy beans, nuts, peanut butter, legumes and fried beans. Milk and milk products are also important sources of protein.
- Fats are intended for energy storage and provide the body with insulation and padding since they are stored mainly under the body skin. Fats are found in all types of oil, butter, margarine, cream and meat. It is advisable to substitute vegetable oil, which is high in polyunsaturated fatty acids (such as canola, corn and safflower oils), as well as margarine, which is high in liquid oil, for some or all of the animal fat or hydrogenated vegetable fats used in cooking. Fish and fish oil may be a good source of protein and high molecular- weight fatty acids.

- Vitamins are essential for proper body functioning. They differ from other nutrients in that they are not used for energy.
- Minerals, although needed in very small amounts, are essential to normal body functioning.
- Water makes up about two-thirds of total body weight. It is necessary for life.
- Fiber is necessary for good bowel function and is found in bran, whole grain cereals, fruits and vegetables.

The above statements are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. You should always consult with your physician about any health and lifestyle concerns or issues you may have.