Tips to Informal Caregivers
on Giving Personal Care

Nutritional Problems of the Aged

Nutritional needs do not change much with advancing years, except for a somewhat lower calorie requirement. Take care to provide for an intake of essential nutrients without excessive calories. The older adult may not eat properly for several reasons.

These problems and suggestions for coping with them, are offered below.

Loneliness - share meals with the person.

Diminished sense of taste and smell - serve meals which look, taste and smell good.

Small appetite - prepare five or six small meals of high quality foods. (High protein-high calorie beverages may be easier to consume than large amounts of food. Consult a physician.)

Chewing problems - related to lack of teeth or poorly fitting dentures. Use tender-cooked ground meats, fish, eggs, cheese and legumes.

Fatigue - rest before meals may be beneficial.

Pain - serve food when pain-relieving medication is most effective.

Constipation - increase fluids in diet.

Improper mouth care - a bad taste in the mouth detracts from enjoyment of food. (See section on mouth care.)

Nausea - small frequent feedings and eating slowly may be helpful. After a stroke, facial weakness and swallowing problems may make it difficult for a person to consume fruit juices and water. Thickened liquids such as milk shakes, gruels, purees, yogurt, sherbet, gelatin and slush may be easier to take.

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.