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Tips for Caregivers: Helping People With Alzheimer's Disease Eat Well

[Español](#)

It's important for people with [Alzheimer's disease](#) to maintain a healthy diet. However, some people may have a poor appetite due to medication, lack of physical activity, or a decreased sense of taste and smell. Below are some suggestions to help keep the person nourished:

- Offer healthy foods such as vegetables, fruits, and whole-grain products. Be sure to buy foods that the person likes and can eat.
- Consider taking advantage of meal kit services, or provide foods that are easy to prepare, such as premade salads and microwaveable meals.
- If the person is still living alone, call to remind them to eat.
- Offer smaller but more frequent meals and calorie-rich snacks; sweeten food with honey or syrup if you are concerned the person is not eating enough.
- Use a service such as Meals on Wheels, which will deliver meals to the person's home. For more information, visit [Meals on Wheels America](#) or call 888-998-6325.



Mealtimes can be hard for someone with Alzheimer's, especially if they have lost some independence. Try these tips to make meals easier:

- If the person has always eaten meals at specific times, continue to serve meals at those times.
- Serve meals in a consistent, familiar place and way whenever possible.
- Make the eating area quiet. Turn off the TV or radio if they distract the person from eating.
- View mealtimes as opportunities for social interaction. You can set the mood with a warm and happy tone of voice.

- Don't rush and don't push. Be patient and give the person enough time to finish their meal.

Over time, people with Alzheimer's may have difficulty eating. Here are some ideas to help make it easier for them to eat:

- Offer just one food at a time instead of filling the plate or table with too many options.
- Cut the food into small pieces and make it soft enough to eat, which will help with chewing and swallowing.
- Enable your loved one to feed themselves if they are able. It may require gentle prompting and patience.
- If your loved one is unable to move the food to their own mouth, try putting your hand on their hand while they hold the fork and guide the food to their mouth.
- Consider pureeing food if the person has difficulty swallowing.
- Avoid overfeeding or force-feeding. Keep in mind that in late stages of Alzheimer's, appetite declines.

Read more about [caring for a person in the last stages of Alzheimer's](#).

You may also be interested in

- Watching a video on [managing personality and behavior changes in Alzheimer's](#)
- Reading about [adapting activities for people with Alzheimer's](#)
- Exploring [resources for getting help with Alzheimer's caregiving](#)

For more information

NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center

800-438-4380

adear@nia.nih.gov

www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers

The NIA ADEAR Center offers information and free print publications about Alzheimer's and related dementias for families, caregivers, and health professionals. ADEAR Center staff answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources.

Alzheimers.gov

www.alzheimers.gov

Explore the Alzheimers.gov website for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

Eldercare Locator

800-677-1116

eldercarelocator@USAgings.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>



[Read and share this infographic](#) on making mealtimes easier for people with Alzheimer's.

USDA Food and Nutrition Service**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

SNAP State Directory of Resources

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-directory**USDA MyPlate**

703-305-2060

www.myplate.gov**Alzheimer's Association**

800-272-3900

866-403-3073 (TTY)

info@alz.orgwww.alz.org**Alzheimer's Foundation of America**

866-232-8484

info@alzfdn.org<https://alzfdn.org>**Family Caregiver Alliance**

800-445-8106

info@caregiver.orgwww.caregiver.org**Meals on Wheels America**

888-998-6325

info@mealsonwheelsamerica.orgwww.mealsonwheelsamerica.org

This content is provided by the NIH National Institute on Aging (NIA). NIA scientists and other experts review this content to ensure it is accurate and up to date.

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