



ELDERCARE PROGRAMME

MALNUTRITION IN ELDERLY PEOPLE

It is important for us to understand where we are at each stage of life and equip ourselves with the necessary tools to be able to enhance our quality of life.

NEWSLETTER

25TH EDITION | FEBRUARY 2016

This sheet is for your general information and is not a substitute for medical advice. You should contact your physician or other healthcare provider with any questions about your health, treatment or care.

Research indicates that as our bodies begin to go into the phase of what is generally termed as the 'older citizen', it becomes more important to ensure we maintain our bodies with the necessary nutrients to prevent a state of Malnutrition.

Definition

Malnutrition occurs when the body does not get sufficient nutrients from the food we eat to work properly. Nutrients include fats, carbohydrates, protein, vitamins and minerals. These substances boost your body's energy level and aid you in ensuring a better state of health. They help your body grow, repair tissues and regulate processes such as breathing and the beating of your heart.

Causes of malnutrition in elderly:

- » Poor appetite due to health-related conditions, such as Diabetes.
- » Adverse effects to treatment.
- » **Psychosocial factors:** low or poor income and informal settlements.
- » Food preparation.
- » **Physical disabilities:** Elders may have limited access to shopping centres.
- » Mental challenges such as forgetfulness (a common condition in elderly).
- » Alcohol abuse.

Signs and symptoms of malnutrition:

- » Unexpected weight loss.
- » Tiredness and lack of energy.
- » Forgetfulness.
- » Weak immune system.
- » Dry skin and brittle nails.
- » Slow healing of wounds and cuts.



Malnutrition interventions:

- One should ideally eat at least three meals a day.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables are encouraged to be part of these meals.
- Proper food preparation.
- Create a weekly eating planner to ensure sufficient nutrition.
- A shopping list is advisable to ensure that nutritional needs are met.
- Drink water adequately to prevent dehydration, more so when it is hot. Five to eight glasses of water is recommended.
- Exercise usually improves appetite and keeps bones and muscles strong. Start off with a daily 10 minute stroll and then increase your pace as your body adjusts .

SUMMARY

You own your health by ensuring that you take good care of your body. Nutrition forms a vital part of one's healthy living. Lack of nutrients in ones' meals is detrimental for one's health and wellbeing.

Healthy eating has been demonstrated to give us energy, improve our thinking and regulate the body's temperature. It is always good to know which foods to eat and being able to prepare it well to sustain our healthy living.

REFERENCES

1. FAMILYDOCTOR. Website: <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/seniors/staying-healthy/preventing-malnutrition-in-older-adults.html>
2. WORLD ORGANISATION. <http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/ageing/en/index1.html>
3. NESTLE NUTRITION INSTITUTE. http://www.mna-elderly.com/causes_of_malnutrition.html
4. NEWS MEDICAL LIFE SCIENCES & MEDICINE. <http://www.news-medical.net/health/Symptoms-of-malnutrition.aspx>
5. BEST PRACTICE ADVOCACY CENTRE NEW ZEALAND. <http://www.bpac.org.nz/BPJ/2011/may/elderly.aspx>
6. NUTRITION. https://www.nutrition.org.uk/attachments/732_Approved%20meal%20planner%20blank.pdf

