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*Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®*

# Caregiver Assistance News

"CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS"

## Nutrition / Food Safety

As the body ages, a person has to make more of an effort to eat wisely.

Most older people need fewer calories, but their bodies *absorb* fewer nutrients so they must eat high-nutrient food to maintain good health. They must get more nutrients from less food.

Check with the doctor before starting any special diets, especially for the person with a swallowing impairment. Also, check with a doctor, pharmacist, or registered dietitian to know what effect prescription medicines have on nutritional needs.

### Tips for Improving Nutrition

Offer food when the person is most hungry, and be sure dentures fit correctly and eyeglasses are on.

- Encourage the person to eat food with the fingers if it increases intake.
- Add non-fat powdered milk to any food with liquid in it, such as desserts, soups, gravy, and cereal.
- Add butter, whipped cream, or sour cream to foods.
- Add cottage cheese or ricotta cheese to casseroles, scrambled eggs, and desserts.
- Grate hard cheeses on bread, meats, vegetables, eggs, and casseroles.
- Use instant breakfast powder in milk drinks and desserts.
- Add nuts, seeds, and wheat germ to breads, cereal, casseroles, and desserts.
- Add beaten eggs to mashed potatoes, sauces, vegetable purees, and cooked puddings.
- Add honey, jam, or sugar, to bread, milk drinks, fruit, and yogurt desserts.
- Add mayonnaise to salads and sandwiches.

NOTE: These may not be the best foods for a person under special medical treatment. Special diets and products to improve nutrition should only be used on the advice of a doctor or registered dietitian.

## Refusing to Eat?

Sometimes emotional, physical or medical conditions cause a person to lose their desire to eat. If the person in your care is having trouble eating, check:

- ☑ Is there a new medication that may be affecting her appetite?
- ☑ Are bowels regular? Constipation can cause loss of appetite.
- ☑ Does she have loose dentures, or sore throat, teeth, or gums?

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☑ Is she suffering from memory loss or mental confusion that makes handling utensils and the eating process confusing?

☑ Finally, is she depressed and needing medication or therapy to regain interest in life?

## Health Basics for the Kitchen

The dirtiest place in your house isn't your bathroom—it's your kitchen sink. Cleaner kitchen tips:

- Clear the sink of dishes and pans before washing hands, and use different towels to dry hands and cookware.
- Keep cutting boards free of nicks and grooves where bacteria can grow.
- Keep your refrigerator working properly, and on a *cold* setting.
- Don't let food linger on countertops before cooking and serving it.
- Keep pets off countertops and dining tables.
- Damp dish towels breed bacteria. Keep them clean and dry, or use paper towels.
- Use dish rags, not sponges. Rags dry faster and you can launder them in hot water.

## Clean Fruits and Veggies

What's the best way to wash fruits and veggies? Scrub them under running tap water for at least 30 seconds! Plain tap water is at removing germs and pesticides. To get your produce really clean, dunk it in a mild vinegar and water solution first (about ½ cup vinegar to 5 cups water), then scrub under tap water. This reduces germs by up to 95%.

*Source: New York Times: A Soap-and-Water Rinse Gets Produce Cleanest*

## Dehydration Prevention

As a person ages, he or she feels less thirsty, so a special effort should be made to provide enough fluids. A person's fluid balance can be affected by medication, emotional stress, exercise, nourishment, general health, and the weather. Dehydration, especially in the elderly, can increase confusion and muscle weakness and cause nausea. Nausea, in turn, will prevent the person from wanting to eat and drink, thereby causing more dehydration.

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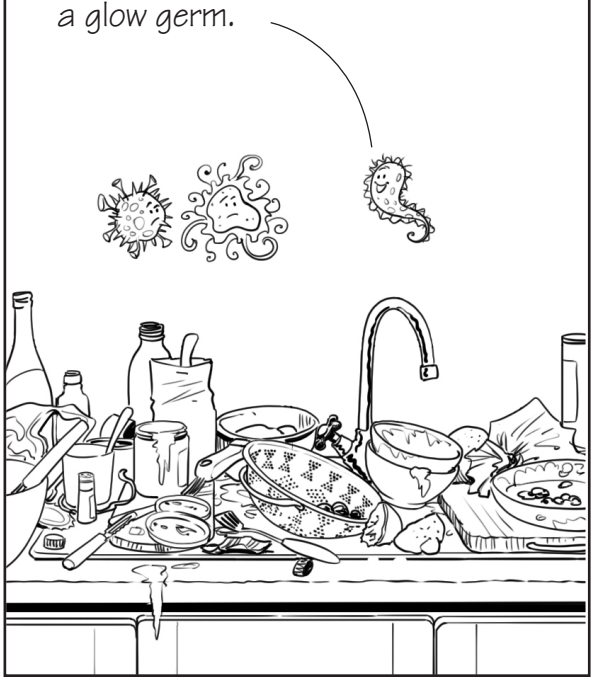
## *Taking Care of Yourself*— Economical and Easy Meals

Pasta, along with beans and lentils, are among the most economical food choices. The good news is that they are also good for you and the person in your care. There is no need to make meat sauce for your spaghetti. Plain tomato sauce is best for your heart and your pocketbook. Most people eat about four times more protein than they need, so skipping the meat is no problem. Make big batches of pasta (and beans and lentils) and then freeze small batches in freezable storage bags or containers for easy reheating later using the microwave. Beans and lentils are among the best-priced sources of protein. They are high in fiber and B vitamins and, unlike animal protein, they don't contain saturated fat or cholesterol to clog your arteries. Lentils are one of the easiest legumes to cook. They don't need soaking and they cook rather quickly—in about 20 minutes.

## Live Life Laughing!

We are all germs, but I believe I am a glow germ.



## *Inspiration*

*If you want your children to listen, try talking softly to someone else.*
*—Ann Landers*

## Memory Care - Meals

In Alzheimer's care be sure to avoid distractions during mealtimes. Expect and ignore spills and less-than-perfect manners. It is important that mealtimes are enjoyable so that eating is encouraged.

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**Our Purpose**

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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## SAFETY TIPS– Meals on Wheels

Daily home-delivered meals help keep 8 out of 10 recipients who have previously fallen from falling again.

*Meals on Wheels* dietitians select meals to provide clients with healthy and satisfying choices. The person in your care may be eligible for the *Meals on Wheels* program if he or she:

- ➡ Is age 60 or older with a spouse of any age, or a disabled person under age 60.
- ➡ Cannot use kitchen appliances.
- ➡ Has no motivation to prepare a meal and no caregiver to help cook.
- ➡ Has become homebound in the winter months.
- ➡ Is recuperating from serious illness or surgery.

For more information call 703/548-5558 or visit www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org

NEXT ISSUE... TRAVEL WITH A PERSON WITH A CHRONIC CONDITION

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## QUICK QUIZ

There are a number of things you can do to help encourage someone to eat and to help the person in your care enjoy meals, such as offering the most nutritious foods at the beginning of the meal when the person is most hungry— save breads and desserts for the end. Answer True or False to the questions below.

**1.** Offer food when the person is most hungry, and be sure dentures fit correctly and eyeglasses are on.

T F

**2.** Special diets and products to improve nutrition should only be used on the advice of a doctor or registered dietitian.

T F

**3.** The dirtiest place in your house is the bathroom.

T F

**4.** Germs cannot grow in cutting board grooves and nicks.

T F

**5.** Most older people need fewer calories, but their bodies *absorb* fewer nutrients so they must eat high-nutrient food to maintain good health.

T F

**6.** To get your produce really clean, dunk it in a mild vinegar and water solution first (about ½ cup vinegar to 5 cups water), then scrub under tap water.

T F

**7.** Pasta, along with beans and lentils, are among the most economical foods.

T F

**8.** Daily home-delivered meals help keep 8 out of 10 recipients who have previously fallen from falling again.

T F

**9.** Sometimes emotional, physical or medical conditions cause a person to lose their desire to eat.

T F

**10.** Memory loss or mental confusion cannot make handling utensils and the eating process confusing.

T F

Name_____

Signature_____ Date_____

KEY: 1. T; 2. T; 3. F; 4. F; 5. T; 6. T; 7. T; 8. T; 9. T; 10. F

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