

Caregiving in  
The Comfort of Home®

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Food Insecurity – Nutrition on a Budget

Food and nutrition insecurity is a term to describe when someone is unable to access or afford enough food or enough *nutritious* food for their overall health and well-being. Food and nutrition insecurity doesn't always mean that someone goes without food; it can mean that they're not getting the *healthiest kind* of food. This can be because nutritious foods may be hard to find in some communities or because they can be too expensive for many to afford. For women and seniors living alone, food insecurity increased.

The United States Department of Agriculture breaks food insecurity into two categories:

**Low food security** is when the food you eat is lower-quality or isn't very appealing, and you don't have many choices. But you typically get enough food.

**Very low food security** is when you can't get food when you need to or you have to eat less because you don't have money or other ways to get it.

Adults in low-income, food-insecure conditions are more likely to get diseases.

Nutritious foods may be too expensive for some people, which limits healthy food choices. Foods that are cheaper and easier to get tend to be lower-quality foods that are high in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium (salt).

A diet that includes plenty of vegetables, fruits, and lean proteins

is important for diabetes management. But some of these nutritious foods cost more than foods that are *high in calories but low in nutrition*. While lower nutritional foods can cost less and provide plenty of calories, they can cause frequent spikes in blood sugar levels (hyperglycemia), which can increase the risk of diabetes-related complications like nerve damage or vision loss.

*Food and Nutrition Insecurity and Diabetes | CDC*

## Resources for You

**Hunger Hotline** from the USDA for information on meal sites, food banks, and other services near you. Call 1-866-3-HUNGRY (1-866-348-6479).

**Meals on Wheels** You may be eligible if you are age 60 or older with a spouse of any age, or a disabled person under age 60 and are recuperating from serious illness or surgery. To find the closest program to you, contact 888-998-6325 [www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org](http://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org)

For other nutrition programs, visit the **Eldercare Locator** at <https://eldercare.acl.gov> or call 800-677-1116.



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## What You *Don't* Eat and What You *Do* Eat

Although *calorie* needs decline with age, nutritional requirements remain the same or in some cases increase. Good nutrition requires effort, knowledge and some planning.

Make vegetables and grains the *main course* and reduce your meat portion to a *side dish*. The recommended meat portion should be no bigger than a deck of cards—much smaller than the typical meat course.

According to the USDA's ChooseMyPlate guidelines, seniors should eat 2–2½ cups of vegetables every day and 1½–2 cups of fruit a day for a total 3½–4½ cups. Eating at least one fruit and vegetable dish at each meal accomplishes that goal.

A variety of food is not only best for dietary needs, but also makes eating more appealing. Varied colors, textures and flavorings can help stimulate appetite. Herbs and seasonings can make up for taste changes, without simply adding more salt.

You can cut food costs by cooking more meals at home and by making sure they include some of the healthiest foods, like whole grains, vegetables, and beans. Cook extra portions and freeze for later use.

### Affordable Nutritious Foods

- Brown Rice
- Whole-Wheat or Multigrain Pasta
- 100% Whole-Wheat Bread
- Nonfat Greek Yogurt/Milk
- Old-Fashioned Oats
- Frozen Vegetables
- Russet or Sweet Potatoes
- Fresh Bagged Spinach
- Beans
- Canned Tuna
- Bananas and frozen berries
- Peanut butter
- Eggs or Egg Substitute
- Dried Beans and Lentils

Remember, *prepared* foods cost more and often have too much *Note*, if the person in your care has medical problems such as diabetes, *special therapeutic* diets should be discussed with the doctor or registered dietitian.

### Saving \$\$\$\$

Simple tips for saving money on food purchases:

- \$ **Plan meals.** Create a list from that meal plan, then shop from that list—it'll help you to stick to your budget.
- \$ **Look for coupons, sales and store specials.** For even more savings, sign up for the store's discount card.
- \$ **Don't shop when you're hungry.** Shopping when full makes it easier to stick to your list.
- \$ **Buy store brands.** They usually cost less and are of similar quality.
- \$ **Compare prices.** Even if you have a coupon, other brands may still be cheaper.
- \$ **Buy larger quantities** when items are on sale. Divide them into smaller portions and freeze them.
- \$ **Check sell-by dates and** buy the freshest food possible.

## Taking Care of Yourself— Poor Eating Habits

Studies have found that caregivers often don't eat as well as they should. In addition, they have higher rates of heart disease than non-caregivers.

In addition, poor eating habits contribute to obesity, which in turn contributes to heart disease and diabetes. Diabetes itself contributes to high levels of heart disease and stroke. Waistline measurements have been shown to predict a variety of diseases. Women with waists larger than 35 inches and men with waists over 40 inches are considered at highest risk. Studies show that waist size is a better predictor of premature death than overall weight.

Try to eat fewer calories. An easy way to do this is to give up sugary snacks and drinks. These are considered "calorie-dense" foods. Calorie-dense foods pack a lot of calories in a small package—like chocolate. For example, 8 ounces of broccoli is 65 calories; 8 ounces of chocolate chip cookies is 1,070 calories!



## Live Life Laughing!

He thinks naptime is a punishment.  
For me it's a small vacation.



## Inspiration

*Let food be thy medicine and  
medicine be thy food.*  
— Hippocrates

## Memory Care - Low Appetite

Evaluate and fix potential physical problems. Bad fitting dentures or dental issues can make eating unpleasant. Medications may be impacting appetite. If you notice the person is coughing a lot or having trouble swallowing, be sure to get swallowing evaluated.

## Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

### Our Purpose

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

### Ordering Info

From the publishers of

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The Comfort of Home®*

*Caregiver Series*

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## SAFETY TIPS— *Cholesterol and Salt Consumption*

Because cholesterol is a major factor in coronary artery disease, it is important to get it checked both in yourself and the person in your care. High numbers may be reduced through appropriate diet, regular exercise, and weight loss. If that doesn't work, check with the doctor about cholesterol-lowering drugs.

The typical American diet is very high in sodium. Even if no salt is added during cooking, most people still consume too much sodium because most processed foods, such as frozen dinners, boxed noodles, and canned soups and vegetables, are high in sodium. When an individual consumes too much sodium, extra fluid builds up in the body, which causes the heart to work harder. So it is very important to look at labels when grocery shopping to avoid foods/products high in sodium. You may hear health care providers talk about low-sodium diet or low-salt diet and wonder if they are the same or whether they are two different diets. There is no difference between the two, doctors and nurses use the terms *sodium* and *salt* to mean the same thing.

Source: *The Comfort of Home for Chronic Heart Failure: A Guide for Caregivers*

# Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

## Q U I C K Q U I Z

Seniors' bodies absorb fewer nutrients so they must eat high-nutrient food to maintain good health. They must get more nutrients from less food. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Food and nutrition insecurity doesn't always mean that someone goes without food; it can mean that they're not getting the *healthiest* kind of food.  
T F
2. Low food security is when the food you eat is lower-quality or isn't very appealing, and you don't have many choices.  
T F
3. Adults in low-income, food-insecure conditions are more likely to get chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer and depression.  
T F
4. You can cut food costs by cooking more meals at home and by making sure they include some of the healthiest foods, like whole grains, vegetables, and beans.  
T F
5. Waistline measurements do not predict a variety of diseases.  
T F
6. According to the current USDA food pyramid, adults should eat 2–2½ cups of vegetables every day and 1½–2 cups of fruit a day for a total 3½–4½ cups.  
T F
7. Even if no salt is added during cooking, most people still consume too much sodium because most processed foods, such as frozen dinners, boxed noodles, and canned soups and vegetables, are high in sodium.  
T F
8. Foods that are cheaper and easier to get tend to be lower-quality foods that are high in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium (salt).  
T F
9. Physical problems such as bad fitting dentures or dental issues will not impact appetite.  
T F
10. While lower nutritional foods can cost less and provide plenty of calories, they can cause frequent spikes in blood sugar levels, which can increase the risk of diabetes-related complications like nerve damage or vision loss.  
T F

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_