

Loss of Appetite – Should I Be Concerned?

Are you experiencing loss of appetite, or perhaps your loved one has lost his or her appetite? How do we know if we should be concerned? “Loss of appetite,” according to a recent article by Dr Margaret-Mary Wilson, a Geriatric physician, “is not a normal part of aging.” Often time it is due to other conditions such as poor-fitting dentures, loneliness or pain.

Depression is the leading cause of poor nutrition, and experts indicate that it should be treated. Older adults are more susceptible to malnutrition because the stomach emptied more slowly as we age. As we grow older, sight, smell, and taste can be diminished, thus affecting our appetites. If an individual is suffering with dementia, it can be a case in which they forget to eat, shop or prepare meals, even to the extent of forgetting how to eat, chew or use utensils.

While some physicians are concerned about older adults getting enough calories, others indicate that calories paced with nutrition are more important for health, stamina and the immune system.

Loss of appetite affects us in so many different ways. As mentioned above, it contributes to a lowering of our immunities, causing us to have more infections, and keeping us from healing properly if we sustain a wound or injury.

Feeling hungry, as we age, is less intense than it was in younger years; therefore, it is often ignored. Often times we simply eat smaller portions because we grow bored with eating.

Dr. Donald Noll, Internal Medicine, states in a recent article that when we eat a meal with another person, it will tend to be one-third larger than a meal eaten alone. Isolation and loneliness are definite contributors to under-nutrition and poor health.

There are other contributing factors that may have adverse health effects, including but not limited to alcohol us, various medications that can decrease appetite, and some conditions such as cancer, COPD and excessive pacing or wandering. These and other conditions may call for increased caloric intake in order to lessen weight loss.

If you, or someone you know, are having difficulty getting proper nutrition, our Meals on Wheels Agency, administered through the local Area Agency on Aging, may be just what you need. You may be eligible to receive home-delivered meals when food shopping or preparing one’s own meals is not possible.

Also, most all of the Adult Centers or Senior Centers here locally offer a noon meal at a nominal fee, which is nutritional and balanced. These lunches not only provide nutrition, but an opportunity to meet others, enjoy conversation and make new friends. The benefits of joining others for lunch or activities can be just what the doctor ordered.

Having visited a majority of the Senior Centers here locally, I can tell you firsthand that it is a pleasant experience with great food, and filled with people who are caring and fun.

Let's start today. If you need help with meals or know someone that is in need of assistance with meals, let someone know. There are many people in our area that are willing to help; you just need to reach out.

Asking for help is not a weakness. In fact, it is a sign that you are on the right track. As we have said, the need for nutrition and balanced meals is so very important in keeping us all healthy and happy.

If you would like information regarding and of the local Senior Centers, Meals on Wheels, or any other resource information, please let us know. We are happy to provide any information we can to help you live a happier, healthier life.

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