

How can I help my loved one to eat healthier?

Changes in the brain can lead to changes in the way a person eats, tastes, and digests food. Your loved one may misinterpret hunger signals and may be unable to express the need for nourishment. To help your loved one get the nourishment her or she needs, consider the following.

Physical Causes

- Vision changes affecting hand-eye coordination may make it difficult for the person to feed himself or herself. This may also make food seem unappealing.
- A reduced sense of smell and taste may decrease appetite.
- Tooth decay, sore gums, ill-fitting dentures, and dry mouth may cause discomfort. Consult with your dentist to address concerns.
- Swallowing difficulty may lead to pocketing (storing) of food in the mouth toward the later stages of the disease. Consult with your doctor for recommendations.



Environmental Causes

- Busy patterns, sounds, and lighting can be distracting and confusing.
- People with cognitive issues often do not understand the environmental cues that tell them that it is time to eat, such as routine, time, lighting, and place.
- Foods that used to be familiar may no longer look familiar, or packaging may be confusing.

What can I do?

- Three large meals can be overwhelming; instead, try six small meals or snacks a day.
- Cut food into smaller pieces; avoid tough cuts of meat, and if utensils are difficult to use try finger foods.
- Try eating meals together. Sit close, and eat slowly so that your loved one can observe and follow your lead.
- Limit mealtime distractions such as bright lights and background noises.
- Set the mood with inviting aromas, comfortable temperature settings, and seating that provides back support.
- Choose plates, cups, and table linens in solid colors. Using a red plate to serve a green vegetable makes it easier for your loved one to identify the food being served.

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What can I do?

- Consider serving healthy, calorie-rich foods, such as peanut butter, avocado, olive oil, and almond butter. Adding even a small amount of these foods can help prevent unintended weight loss. Add brain-healthy ingredients to your recipes. These include salmon; poultry; berries; dark, leafy green vegetables; and whole grains (e.g. brown rice, quinoa, oatmeal).
- Cut food into smaller pieces; avoid tough cuts of meat or foods that are hard to chew. Consider finger foods if utensils are too difficult to use.

For More Information:

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