EXQUISICARE
SENIOR LIVING
WHERE LOVE MATTERS

Senior Nutrition Myths

The right diet and nutritional intake is arguably more important for seniors than for any other age group. Seniors have unique nutritional needs that can only be addressed when they are understood. Unfortunately, many false beliefs about a senior's nutritional needs exist. Be aware of these myths so that seniors can start eating right or improving their health in other ways.

Here are a few common but false beliefs about senior nutrition:

Myth #1: It's Natural For Older People to Lose Their Appetite

It's true that seniors need less food than younger adults because of metabolic changes and decreased energy output, but an outright loss of appetite is not normal, and could be a sign of serious health problem.

What's more, simple causes such as a decreased sense of taste or dental problems can lead to seniors eating less and make it appear as though their appetite has decreased when it hasn't. Seniors should weigh themselves (or be weighed by their caregivers) periodically to look for changes. Any sudden weight loss should be seen as a red-flag and warrants a visit to the doctor.

Myth #2: It Doesn't Matter Whether an Older Person Eats Alone or With Others – Food is Just Fuel For the Body

Elderly people who live alone and are left to prepare food by themselves, often have bad outcomes. Physical and cognitive problems often cause seniors to become unable to prepare adequately nutritious or filling meals. Eating almost every meal in isolation can also exacerbate loneliness, stress and anxiety. In other words, constantly eating alone can put seniors at risk.

Many seniors experience dramatic health improvements when they move to a long term care home for the simple reason that they are eating well and enjoying the company of others. At Exquisicare our goal is for meal times to be a time for a residents and staff to sit down and share food and company.

Myth #3: As Long as Seniors Follow Healthy Eating Guidelines, They'll Be Fine

Eating guidelines provided by The Canada Food Guide are based on decades of research into health. The Canada Food Guide is used to communicate the components of a healthy diet in simple way that anyone can understand. If more people followed these simple guidelines, Canadians would be healthier. But most eating guidelines do not provide for the nuances and special nutritional needs of seniors:

Food guidelines may suggest a diet that contains ingredients that interact dangerously with a senior's medication. Food guidelines may suggest a diet that could worsen common conditions among seniors such as diabetes and heart disease. A senior's difficulty chewing or swallowing could make adhering to guidelines challenging. Seniors need more of certain vitamins and minerals to maintain optimum health, and this may not be reflected in the guidelines

Government food guidelines should serve as a reference point, but seniors (or their caregivers) must consider the nutritional and culinary implications of both their medicines and any health problems that can be influenced by diet. Seniors who are dealing with food-drug interactions or related problems should speak with their physician about creating personalized guidelines.

Myth #4: Seniors Have Slower Metabolisms and Need Fewer Nutrients

While seniors may need slightly fewer calories and food-bulk than younger adults, they need just as many nutrients, if not more. One reason is that as we age, our ability to absorb nutrients decreases.

Specifically, physicians recommend that older adults increase their intake of calcium, as well as vitamins D and B12.

Myths #5: Seniors With a Weak Appetite can Safely Skip Meals

There are numerous drawbacks to skipping meals. For one, it can cause our body to crave food to such an extent that at the next meal we overindulge in the extreme, which is not healthy.

On the other hand, and somewhat paradoxically, skipping meals can further decrease a senior's appetite. Another major risk of skipping meals is that it can wreak havoc on blood sugar levels, which has numerous negative health implications.

with foods that are high in fat, sugar, or salt, and low in nutrients.