

Tips for Eating Well for Older Adults

Many older people have trouble eating well. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration offers some solutions to several common problems.

PROBLEM: Can't Cook

Problems with cooking can include difficulty holding utensils, pots and pans or trouble standing for long periods of time.

What one should do:

- A microwave oven can be used to cook TV dinners, other frozen foods and foods made ahead of time by the store.
- Group meal programs offered through senior citizen programs can provide cooked meals, either at their location or brought to the home.
- Visiting Angels can provide a caregiver who can cook nutritious meals in the comfort of the home.
- Moving to a place where someone else will cook, such as a family member's home or a home for senior citizens, can be considered.

PROBLEM: Can't Chew

Those who have trouble chewing may have trouble eating foods, such as meat, fresh fruits and vegetables.

What one should do: Try other foods

Instead of:	Try:
fresh fruit	fruit juices and soft canned fruits, such as applesauce, peaches and pears
raw vegetables	vegetable juices; creamed, mashed and cooked vegetables
meat	ground meat, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt and foods made with milk, such as pudding and cream soups
sliced bread	cooked cereals, rice, bread pudding and soft cookies



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PROBLEM: Upset Stomach

Too much gas and other stomach problems may cause people to stay away from foods they think cause the problem. This means they could be missing out on important nutrients, such as vitamins, calcium, fiber and protein.

What one should do: Try other foods

Instead of:	Try:
milk	milk foods that may not upset the stomach, such as cream soups, pudding, yogurt and cheese
vegetables, such as cabbage and broccoli	vegetable juices and other vegetables, such as green beans, carrots and potatoes
fresh fruit	fruit juices and soft canned fruits

PROBLEM: No Appetite

Older people who live alone sometimes feel lonely at mealtimes, a feeling which can result in loss of appetite. Or they may not feel like making meals for just themselves. Maybe the food prepared has no flavor or tastes bad. This could be caused by medicines they are taking.

What one should do:

- Contact Visiting Angels to get a companion to not only prepare meals, but to participate in making meal time a social time.
- Ask a doctor if medicines could be causing appetite or taste problems. If so, ask about changing medicines.
- Take part in group meal programs offered through senior citizen programs.
- Increase the flavor of food by adding spices and herbs.
- Eat with family and friends.

PROBLEM: Can't Shop

Some people may have problems shopping for food as a result of being unable to drive or having trouble walking or standing for a long time.

What one should do:

- Request a local food store deliver groceries to the home. Some stores provide this service for free, while others may charge a fee.
- A church, synagogue or local volunteer center can be contacted with a request for volunteer help.
- A family member or neighbor can provide help with shopping.
- Visiting Angels can be hired to provide shopping assistance.