



Putting the CARE back in Healthcare...

By Nikki Troisi, AristaCare at Whiting



March is National Nutrition Month. Why not take the time to assess the types of food you are eating, and that you are maintaining well balanced meals? It is always important to watch what you eat, but as seniors there are so many factors that can be affected by the type of foods you eat and how much of it you consume. As you age, health issues and physical limitations can sometimes make eating a nutritionally balanced meal difficult. Did you know that 15-50 percent of the elderly population suffer from poor nutrition which is often mistaken for illness? Symptoms of mal-nutrition include lightheadedness, weight loss, disorientation, lethargy and lack of appetite. You can see how these symptoms can easily be misdiagnosed as some type of illness.

There are also many factors that lead to poor eating habits in the elderly. It can be anything from arthritis affecting how and what someone may cook to how much one can spend on groceries per week. Many times it may seem easy to make a stop at the McDonalds drive thru and only spend \$5 on a full meal, but what you save in finances will surely lack in nutrition. Here are some tips that you can follow to help maintain a nutritionally balanced lifestyle, even on a budget!

Make eating a social event - Many times there are events around the Whiting area that offer free refreshments or meals. For example, AristaCare offers a health screening every 1st Tuesday of the month where we offer a yogurt Bar filled with balanced nutrition. We just recently had a wonderful Valentine's Day taste testing. All food was free and nutritionally balanced (even tho we snuck some chocolate in for Valentine's Day - it is ok to indulge every once and a while!).

Make sure you have a ride to the grocery store - If you have a ride you can easily store non perishable foods in your house that are sure to be more nutritious than those from a fast food chain. Pre-bagged salads make it easy to get in your vegetables. Fruits, such as bananas, are always available and are easy to grab as a healthy snack. Nuts are also another great snack filled with protein, fiber and healthy fats. The FDA has recognized hazelnuts, peanuts, almonds, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios, and walnuts for their heart healthy benefits. Nuts are very easy to buy and can easily be stored at home.

Give yourself reminders – Everyone gets forgetful, so try and schedule your meals at the same time every day. Verbal and visual reminders might help too, like writing it on the refrigerator or setting an alarm.

Look into government assisted programs – If money are an issue the gov't offers many programs such as Meals on Wheels that will supply well balanced meals right to your door.

Maintain dental hygiene – Maintaining oral hygiene can enhance nutrition and appetite, for example make sure your dentures fit properly allowing you to chew pain free.

Snack throughout the day – If you do not like to eat three large meals a day then try snacking. Make sure your snacks are filled with fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Try and stay away from frozen meals that are usually high in saturated fat and sodium.

There are many challenges that face the elderly when dealing with nutrition (keeping a low sodium, diabetic, or heart healthy diet). If you ever have any questions regarding your diet it is always important to consult with your physician or a dietitian. AristaCare recently hired Maria Bongiovanni, a registered dietitian with 17+ years who would be happy to speak with you regarding any questions you may have. Always remember, AristaCare's open door policy...call on us whenever you need us...we're here – ready, willing, and able to serve.

GOT A HEALTHCARE RELATED QUESTION? WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.
PLEASE WRITE TO:

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