



Dementia/ Alzheimer's & Nutrition

Dementia is the loss of memory, cognitive reasoning, awareness of environment, judgment, abstract thinking, or the ability to perform activities of daily living. The most common form of dementia is **Alzheimer's disease**, a type of dementia that involves slowly developing symptoms that get worse over time. Dementia resulting from vitamin deficiencies, or caused by underlying disease (such as brain tumors and infections) may be reversible. Other forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer's and vascular dementia, are not reversible, and are often treated with medications.

As dementia progresses, changes can occur that may affect someone's ability to obtain adequate food and nutrients to maintain their health status. Such changes will vary depending on the type of dementia, as well as the stage of the disease. Some of these changes include:

- Altered sense of smell and/or taste
- Inability to recognize food or distinguish between food and non-food items
- Poor appetite
- Chewing difficulties (pocketing food, repetitive chewing, etc.)
- Swallowing difficulties
- Forgetting to eat
- Shortened attention span leading to a loss of interest in eating
- Difficulty using eating utensils
- Increase in pacing or walking
- Drug side effects

Wesley Glen
(614) 888-7492

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The symptoms of dementia vary, and the treatment and nutrition care should be determined by these symptoms. Some techniques to consider for continued delivery of food and nutrition include:

- Provide kind reminders to eat.
- Provide meals in a low stress environment, minimizing noise and visual distractions.
- Develop a meal routine that can be repeated over time, to provide meals at similar times, or even similar meals every day.
- Have someone eat with the individual to provide assistance and reminders on how to eat.
- Have family join the individual at meal times to encourage eating.
- Pay attention to other health issues, such as infections, fevers, injuries, or other illnesses, as these may increase food and fluid needs.
- Provide well-liked food and drinks to encourage eating.
- Limit the amount of food served at one time so as not to overwhelm.
- Provide finger-type foods for individuals struggling to use utensils:
 - Hamburgers
 - French fries
 - Carrot sticks



Check with a dietitian or doctor for any specific dietary needs.

Additional Notes:

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