

Forgetting to Eat or Refusing Food



When people with memory problems forget to or refuse food, it means that they are in need of some extra help. As a caregiver, there are a lot of things you can try to keep people eating and healthy.

To encourage food intake, try these simple tips:

Make the meal colourful and desirable. Talk about the food, how it looks and tastes.

Talk about food in general, what you like or don't like, reminisce about special meals and food eaten when growing up. Talk about the food when you are preparing it. By talking about food, interest in eating may increase.

Try to have a routine. Talk about the timing of meals in relation to other activities and give reminders before the meal will occur.

Put out the dishes before the meal, and get everyone involved in meal tasks.

Leave healthy snacks around the house, like vegetable slices, bread or pieces of fruit.

Go for a short walk before a meal. Getting more exercise can increase people's hunger and make them more likely to eat at a meal.

Choose foods high in nutrition, even in small amounts these will help to maintain health.

If some meals are eaten alone, you can:

Try phoning before a meal to remind and walk through simple preparation, like taking a prepared sandwich out of the fridge.

Have written instructions available for the microwave, toaster oven, coffee maker or electric kettle.

Use a daily calendar to outline activities, including meals and snacks.

If someone is refusing to eat, it may be a sign of discomfort. To help them get back to enjoying food, you can:

Make old favourite foods into a softer form, such as bread pudding or soup. These foods will not be hard to chew and may be easier to swallow.

Check teeth and make sure dentures fit properly.

Eat at a time when they feel most up to it.

Sometimes ensuring that a person with memory problems gets enough nutrition can be challenging. At mealtimes, remember to focus on the company of the person, rather than what they are or are not eating, to make the experience relaxing and enjoyable for all.