

# Nutrition

## Improving Your Health with Nutrition Assistance

You may experience malnutrition as you age if you are not able to eat well-balanced, nutritious foods. Malnutrition is not tied to your weight. So, whether you are underweight, overweight, or obese, you may still be malnourished and your health and well-being may decline. Fortunately, Older Americans Act (OAA) nutrition assistance programs offer well-balanced, nutritious meals, which may help you reduce your health risks.

### Changes as You Age

With age you may experience malnutrition due to:

- Decrease in appetite
- Decreased ability to process food
- Problems with chewing and swallowing
- Oral health problems with your teeth and gums
- Problems with mobility and vision that create difficulty shopping for or preparing food
- Medications taken for chronic illness that can cause poor digestion or appetite, and affect your nutrition needs
- Diseases that cause problems with thinking, learning, and remembering or your emotions, like Alzheimer's disease and depression. They may prevent you from organizing meals or wanting to eat.

### Effects of Malnutrition

Malnutrition can cause you to have:

- Difficulty with learning, thinking, and remembering
- Loss of muscle and bone
- More infections, illness, and falls
- Poor quality of life

Research shows that nutrition services can improve your health, function, and quality of life.

### Ask Your Health Care Provider for a Nutrition Screening

Experts recommend a yearly nutrition screening when you have no functional problems.

- If you receive services and supports to remain at home, you may need screening four times a year.

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

If you have a low income, you may not be able to afford enough good quality food.

You may be eligible for the [SNAP](#), which offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families.

### Find the Nearest Nutrition Assistance Program

Visit the [Eldercare Locator](#) or call 1-800-677-1116.

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## Research shows that, when you need home-delivered meals, the meals can improve your nutrition, function, and well-being.

- If the screening identifies nutrition risks, then you need an assessment to determine the causes. The assessment should include your: medical history, medicines, diet, oral health, swallowing ability, physical and cognitive function, digestive and brain health conditions, body measurements, laboratory analysis, and social aspects of your life.

Based on the assessment, you may need a unique set of solutions that could involve:

- Providing snacks, and, perhaps, nutrition supplements
- Improving meals
- Treating oral health problems
- Managing medicines or therapies to control symptoms
- Treating depression
- Promoting social interaction
- Connecting to nutrition assistance programs

### Improve Meals

Steps to improving your meals may include:

- Getting advice about your diet
- Improving the quality of your meals:
  - » Eat a variety of nutritious foods

- » Make fruits and vegetables central to your diet
- » Eat nuts, legumes, and whole grains
- » Eat fish
- » Eat/drink low-fat dairy products
- » Limit refined foods and sugar
- » Reduce salt intake

- Improving your eating environment
- Getting assistance with eating when needed

### Use Federal Nutrition Assistance Programs

If you are age 60 and over, you and your spouse of any age may be eligible for [OAA nutrition programs](#). To be eligible for home-delivered meals, you must need to remain at home, or be frail, or isolated.

OAA nutrition programs:

- Provide healthy food
- Promote socialization
- Improve health and well-being
- Offer nutrition screening and education
- Offer, when appropriate, nutrition assessment and counseling
- Make it possible to remain at home