

Improving Dining for Residents with Dementia

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Basic Needs for Sustainable Life

Water/Hydration

Food/Nutrition

Shelter/Security

Love/Acceptance/Belonging

Dementia

Definition

A chronic or persistent disorder of the mental processes caused by brain disease or injury and marked by memory disorders, personality changes, and impaired reasoning.

Dementia is not a specific disease. It's an overall term that describes a wide range of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities.

Dementia

Nutritional Challenges

A person with dementia may:

- Experience a loss of appetite
- Develop an insatiable appetite or a craving for sweets
- Forget to eat and drink
- Forget how to chew or swallow
- Experience a dry mouth, or mouth discomfort
- Be unable to recognize the food and drink they are given

Dementia

Loss of Appetite

Possible Remedies:

1. Increase nutrient density, not portion size
2. Set a regular eating schedule
3. Encourage social meals
4. Be aware of medication side effects
5. Consider using an appetite stimulant

Dementia

Insatiable appetite or a craving for sweets

1. Insatiable appetites in persons with dementia are normally caused by forgetting that they have eaten.
2. Taste buds are diminished as people age. People with dementia opt for heavy foods or foods with a lot of flavor, like sugary sweets.
3. Researchers have found that the brain actually produces insulin, just like the pancreas. The amount of insulin produced in the brain drops as Alzheimer's progresses, which leads to brain cell death, especially in the parts of the brain responsible for memory.

Dementia



Dementia

Forget to Eat or Drink

1. Just as with an insatiable appetite, dementia can cause the exact opposite – forgetting to eat or drink.
2. Set an alarm clock, or schedule a phone call. This could be a useful reminder.
3. Provide Snacks that are easy to eat and don't need refrigerated. Leave them out in plain sight
4. Start meals with a glass of water, refill often, and offer more water after meal.

Dementia

Forget s How to Chew or Swallow

Signs of Chewing or Swallowing Difficulties

1. Coughing during or after eating or frequently clearing the throat.
2. Grimacing when swallowing.
3. Exaggerated movement of jaw, lip or tongue.
4. Holding food in mouth but not doing anything with it.
5. Refusing to swallow or spitting lumps of food out.
6. Cramming too much food in the mouth or eating very fast.

Dementia

Forget s How to Chew or Swallow

Possible reasons for problems:

1. Toothache
2. A sore mouth
3. Dentures that do not fit properly
4. Medication
5. Infection
6. Dysphagia

Dementia

Forget s How to Chew or Swallow

Making eating easier:

1. Offer soft food that requires minimal chewing.
2. Use smaller utensils and specially designed cups which allow drinking whilst keeping the chin down.
3. Choose strong flavors rather than bland ones, as these can stimulate the brain to swallow, and also try to offer a variety of hot and cold food in one meal.

Dementia

Forget s How to Chew or Swallow

Making eating easier:

4. If the person you're caring for is extremely slow to swallow, try putting an empty spoon to their mouth, as if offering more food. This can act as a reminder to swallow.
5. Make sure they're sitting upright and are as calm and comfortable as possible before you begin.
6. Consider thickening fluids to make the food easier to control, you can get advice about how to use them from your GP or a dietician.

Dementia

Forget s How to Chew or Swallow

Making eating easier:

7. Avoid small hard textures such as sweetcorn, peanuts and peas, and stringy textures such as cabbage, or bacon.
8. Cook food longer, mash it with a fork, or puree it in a blender or food processor.
9. Try not to offer mixed textures of liquids and solids, such as milk and cereal or minestrone soup as they can make choking more likely.
10. Be patient.

Dementia

Foods for good nutrition



Dementia

Other tips to improve Eating

1. Allow as many independent choices as possible.
2. Provide a quiet space for dining with very little distractions. Soft music is fine. No TV.
3. Color contrasts are helpful. Examples: Lime green table cloths layered next to darker burgundy plates. Lighter toned plates provided for darker toned food items. Dark-colored chair cushions used against a lighter toned floor.
Great product – Fiestaware China (Solid Colors)

Dementia

Other tips to improve Eating

4. Prepare attractive foods that can be picked up with fingers.
5. Make sure plate and food are in comfortable reach.
6. Avoid a lot of utensils, glasses and plates on the table at the same time.
7. Serve one plate at a time.
8. When serving soup use a cup or mug half filled.
9. Serve familiar foods, or foods that the person grew up eating.

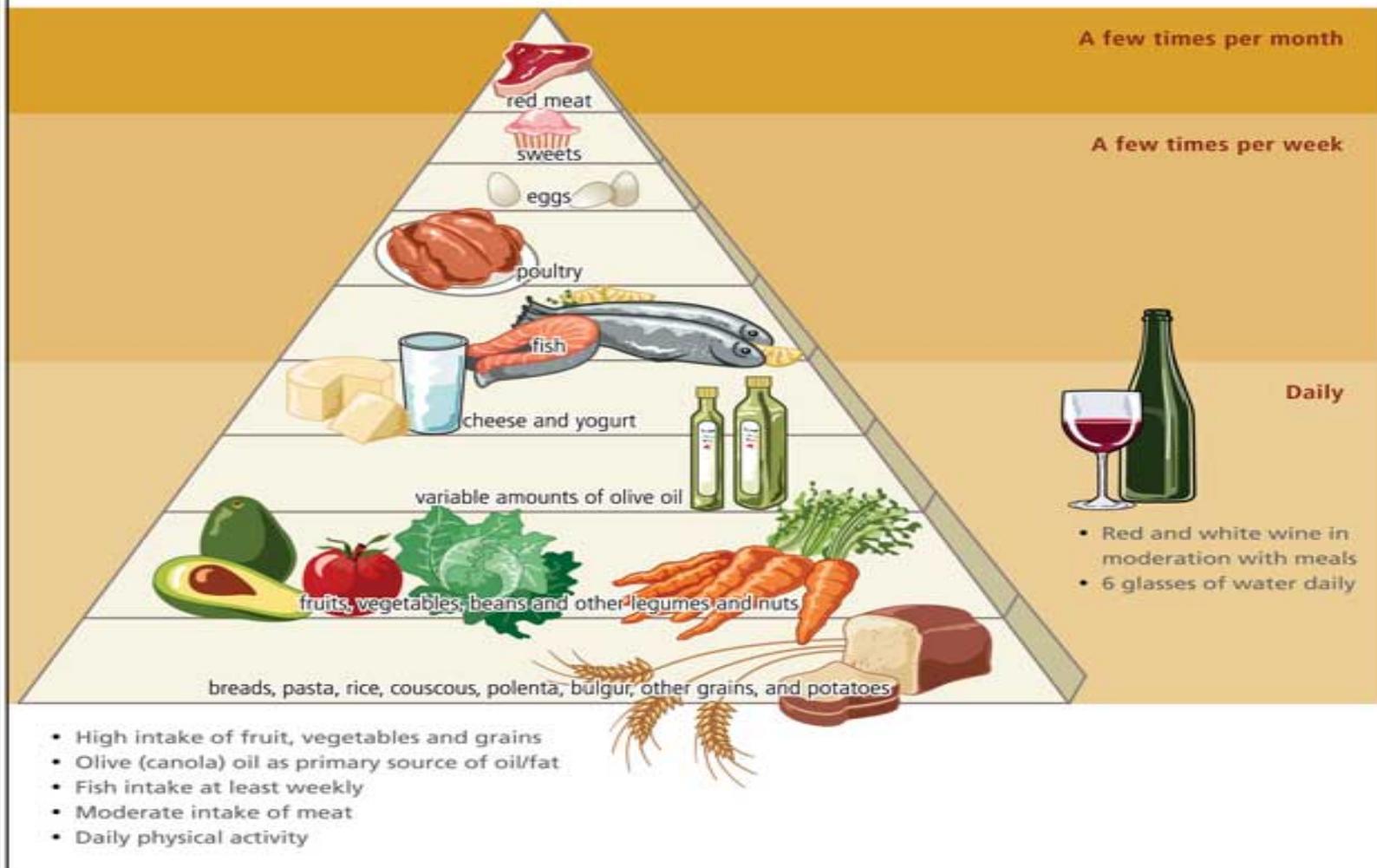
Dementia

Other tips to improve Eating

10. Serve smaller portions that are well defined on the plate.
11. Cut larger items into bite sized pieces.
12. Cut sandwiches into quarters.
13. Serve dessert separately when meal is removed.
14. Use lighter weight cups if needed.
15. Only use straws if the person can use them.
16. Serve supplements if and when intake becomes poor.

Dementia

Figure 1:
The Mediterranean Diet: A healthy eating pattern



Dementia



Dementia

Open Discussion

1. Are there any tips that you have for improving dining with persons with dementia that were not discussed already?
2. What have you heard or read that helps prevent dementia?
3. What can you use from this session to help improve the lives of those you serve?