



Nutrition for Older Adults: Chewing, Swallowing and Nutrition

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Chewing and Swallowing

Good nutrition can help keep the body healthy. However chewing and swallowing problems can get in the way of good nutrition.

Changes in Saliva

Saliva moistens food and makes swallowing easier. However, the amount of saliva tends to decrease with age. Foods may seem dry and more difficult to swallow.

Changes in Teeth

Tooth loss makes eating and chewing foods difficult. Many older adults are unable to adjust to dentures or have dentures that do not fit.

Very hot or very cold foods may be painful for people with dental problems.

Poor chewing can also increase the risk of choking.

People with tooth loss, gum disease, or poor fitting dentures tend to eat softer foods or limit food intake which can lead to a poor diet.

Tips if Chewing and Swallowing is a Problem

- Drink beverages with meals to help with swallowing.
- Make sure dentures fit properly.
- Eat slowly and chew food thoroughly.
- Watch for signs of choking.

Tips for Modifying Foods if Chewing or Swallowing is a Problem

- Use gravy or sauces to moisten food to ease swallowing.

- Mash foods if that is an acceptable food form such as mashed potatoes or mashed baked squash.
- Shred raw vegetables or fruits and use them in salads, gelatins or stir-fry.
- Meats in particular can be difficult to chew and swallow.
 - Use thin meat slices that are easy to bite through.
- Precut meats and put smaller bite size pieces in casseroles, soups or stews.
- Softer meats or meat alternatives are easier to chew and swallow. Try moist meat loaf, grilled cheese, deviled eggs, egg salad, soft meat salads, meat or milk-based soups, milk-based puddings and custards.

Sources

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