

## **Client Nutritional Needs**

As we age, our calorie needs decrease due to an overall loss of muscle mass and a decrease in metabolism. While this may be the case, getting the right nutrition is still very important. There are factors that may make it a challenge for our seniors to eat. Fatigue or weakness can make it a challenge for someone to cook a proper meal for themselves. Dementia can make it a challenge to put all the steps together to cook. Some medications have a side-effect that might make some foods have a bad taste. In addition, as we age, it is normal for our taste buds to change. Foods that once tasted good to us might not always taste good.

Home Care Assistants may find the following tips helpful in assisting seniors to eat properly:

- Give small meals several times a day instead of 3 larger ones
- Cater to their food choices – ensure they are within the guidelines of any prescribed diet
- Add herbs and spices that they like to improve the flavor of food
- Present food in an appealing manner

### *Other tips:*

Make sure to label and date leftovers. Throw out leftovers after 3 or 4 days.

ChooseMyPlate.gov is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's website where you can find out what your calorie and nutrition needs are based on gender, age, and activity level.

Help clients stay hydrated by offering them a variety of liquids, including water, juice, and tea every time you see them.

If swallowing is an issue for a client, make sure you are following diet guidelines.

Wash your hands frequently during food prep and after food prep.

Tie your hair back during food prep.

Cook foods thoroughly.

Use hot, soapy water to wash dishes.

Keep a weekly grocery shopping list and write things down as you run out.

With your client, find fun recipes that are within their budget that you would like to try.