

**Something to think about - Why Prearrange?**

People prearrange funerals for a variety of reasons.

- Personal preferences for their funeral service.
- To save family from decision making during difficult times.
- Alleviate family of financial burden.
- Little or no family to make arrangements.

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- Alleviate financial stress to family.
- Preserve assets when applying for medical assistance or supplemental social security.

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Timothy Pearson,  
director

# When weight loss may be worrisome



Seniors may need some help with meals to ensure they do not suffer the effects of malnutrition.

DiETING is a way of life for many people. The Boston Medical Center says an estimated 45 million Americans go on a diet each year, spending \$33 billion annually on weight loss products. The figures are close to \$7 billion in Canada. However, for one segment of the population — the elderly — weight loss can be a sign of something wrong.

The Mayo Clinic says that malnutrition is a serious health concern among seniors. Inadequate nutrition can result in weight loss that has far-reaching health effects. These include a compromised immune system, which increases the risk of infections, poor wound healing and muscle weakness that can result in falls and fractures.

Malnutrition also can lead to further disinterest in eating, which only com-

pounds a weight loss problem. Weight loss and loss of appetite are common among seniors, particularly those with dementia. Learning to recognize weight loss signs in the elderly can help others act promptly to correct the problem.

According to senior care advocate and placement center A Place for Mom, the senior population is at risk of malnourishment for several reasons, including:

- lack of energy to cook,
- specific health conditions that impact ability to prepare or acquire meals,
- lack of appetite attributed to decreased taste bud function or depression,
- inability to afford quality foods, and
- side effects of certain medications.

Unfortunately, malnutrition is a very common, yet widely undiagnosed, problem among seniors. If a friend or loved one has visible bones under the skin; loose dentures; loose rings on fingers; has dropped clothing sizes; or is leaving food on his or her plate, they may be suffering from malnourishment. Concerned loved ones can take several steps to determine if their friend or family member is malnourished.

• Observe loved ones' eating habits at home to see how they are eating. Routinely check the refrigerator and pantry to see which foods your loved one is eating. In a nursing home setting, check with a nursing administrator to see how mealtimes are going.

• Speak with doctors to see if weight loss is a side effect of medications or another health concern. Bring up any concerns you have about malnutrition.

• Provide finger food or easy-to-manage foods for seniors who have lost dexterity so they're still able to feed themselves.

• Encourage foods that are fortified with nutrients. Supplementation with nutritional shakes can help fill the void.

• Make meals social events so that the concept of gathering around the table for food is fun.

• Mild or moderate exercise can stir up one's appetite. Walking or chair-based exercises can help make people more interested in food.

• Introduce new foods that can whet the appetite.

Weight loss can benefit some people. But among the elderly, weight loss may be a byproduct of malnutrition.

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