

Good Nutrition Is Vital In the Overall Health of the Individual

- In order for the human body to continue to grow normal cells, maintain normal functioning of all systems, and have energy for activities, a well-balanced diet is needed.

However, it is important to remember:

- Everyone is different! Each patient is different and cannot be compared to other patients of the same age or condition.
- Nutritional status is based on the patient's body composition, functional status, and the presence of illness or disease
- Your food and physical activity choices each day affect your health — how you feel today, tomorrow, and in the future.

What you will learn?

- ♣ The food pyramid guidelines
- ♣ Importance of nutrition and hydration
- ♣ Food safety guidelines
- ♣ Healthy eating tips



The food pyramid Guidelines:

Grains	Vegetables	Fruits	Dairy	Protein foods
Make half your grains whole.	Vary your veggies.	Focus on fruits.	Get your calcium-rich foods.	Go lean with protein.

- The food pyramid is not the same as it used to be.** No longer are there a set number of servings per day that a person is advised to consume.
- The USDA Food Patterns recommend selecting a variety of foods within each food group.** This allows for personal choice, and helps to ensure that the foods and beverages selected by individuals over time provide a mix of nutrients that will meet their needs. Recommended weekly intake amounts are specified for the five vegetable subgroups (dark-green, red and orange, beans and peas, starchy, and other vegetables). In the protein foods group, 8 or more ounces per week of seafood is recommended (less for young children), and in the grain group, selecting at least half of all grains as whole grains is recommended. In the fruit and dairy groups, there are no quantitative recommendations for making selections within the group. However, selecting more fruit rather than juice, and more fat-free or low-fat vitamin D-fortified milk or yogurt than cheese is encouraged.
- It is important for the home care aide to recognize that there could be physical or mental factors which may affect a patient's nutritional practices such as: constipation, decreased taste, decreased appetite, depression, forgetfulness. Talk to your supervisor if you notice this with your clients.

The importance of nutrition, health, and hydration cannot be stressed enough. And while it is important to encourage our patients to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, **we must also follow our own advice and do the same if we are to live up to our fullest potential each day!**

HYDRATION

Water is the most essential nutrient for life. Water aids in digestion and absorption of food as well as helping to eliminate waste. Water also helps to maintain normal body temperature.

Minimum daily requirements for water vary with age, however most adults need about 6 to 8 glasses of water per day. Infants and young children need more water than adults do.

Maintaining fluid balance is essential for good health. A lot of home care patients will be at risk of dehydration. Infants and young children are not able to tolerate fluid loss as well as an adult, which could lead to death. Older people drink less because they are less thirsty and their receptors that monitor fluid intake are less responsive than they were when they were younger. Older people or the disabled tend to drink less because of the fear of incontinence.

It is important for the aide to monitor adequate fluid intake. Dehydration can lead to constipation, dry skin, dizziness and weakness. It can become a serious medical condition and would warrant medical care. A doctor may alter a patient's water intake for medical reasons. That may be the case if the patient has a history of edema or certain heart problems or kidney or liver problems. Your nurse supervisor will let you know if your patients need to force fluids or restrict fluids.

Often times, physicians may recommend that patients follow a special diet. A special diet might be recommended for several reasons – a nutritional deficiency, postoperative care, disease management, weight control, or to decrease certain substances in the diet that may be harmful to a patient's health.

Important Review

"Forcing fluids" means the patient should drink increased amounts of fluid.

"Restricting fluids" is when fluid is given to the patient in smaller amounts.

"Nothing by mouth (NPO)" means the patient is not to eat or drink anything. This is typically ordered the night before surgery, lab tests, some x-rays, or due to certain illnesses.

You must receive specific, written instruction if you are assigned to force, restrict or place someone NPO.

Food Safety: Making good food choices doesn't stop at buying healthy food. Safely handling and preparing food is just as important. Here are some examples:

***Always** wash fruits and vegetables before consuming. Even if the food has a peel on it, you will be handling the peeling and could therefore transmit potential pathogens onto the food under the peel. Wash the outside peeling before you begin to prepare that food.

***Keep** surfaces in the kitchen clean.

***Wash** your hands.

***Clean** lids of canned goods before opening.

***Separate** raw foods from other foods. Cross-contamination could occur. Use separate cutting boards and/or utensils when cooking with meat and other foods.

***Always** cook food thoroughly. Don't trust your eyes – you can't tell what the inside of your food looks like. Use a food thermometer to measure internal temperature of the food.

***Refrigerate** food promptly – preferably within 1 hour.

Meal Preparation:

- When preparing meals for a patient, the home care aide must be aware of potential dietary restrictions, food allergies, and of course patient preferences. If there is a special diet recommended, the nurse will inform the home care aide of those restrictions. It is not the role of the home care aide to suggest dietary changes or limitations to the patient.
- Of particular importance to consider are the patient's regional, culture, and/or religious food preferences/restrictions. The place or culture we grew up in influences the kinds of foods we like to eat.
- Certain religious practices influence diet. For example, patients who need to eat kosher foods or who cannot eat meat.
- Ethnic and religious groups often have certain foods that are common to them and may be eaten at certain times of the year.
- Always ask your patient about preferences and be respectful of food choices based on these factors.
- As the home care aide, you might be expected to assist the patient with his/her nutritional needs.

While it is ultimately the role of the nurse or supervisor to determine what diet recommendations to follow, the home care aide can offer support to the patient in other ways. Discuss with your supervisor if you notice your patient not eating all the food; refusing to eat; having stomach distress after eating such as diarrhea, nausea and/or vomiting; lack of food in the home; exhibiting signs of dehydration; or experiencing changes in taste. Ask the nurse for assistance if you notice any of these or other changes in the patient's eating or drinking.