In-Home Aides

Partners in Quality Care

MAY 2019

NUTRITION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines nutrition as “the intake of food, considered in relation to the body’s dietary needs.” Good nutrition – an adequate, well balanced diet combined with regular physical activity – is a cornerstone of good health. Poor nutrition can lead to reduced immunity, increased susceptibility to disease, impaired physical and mental development, and reduced productivity.”

From the different food categories (fruit, vegetable, grains, protein and dairy) the goal is to receive a daily supply of 6 basic nutrients: protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals and water. Nutritional status is based on a person’s body composition, functional status, and the presence of illness or disease. 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. Malnutrition is the lack of proper nutrition because of a lack of food intake, improper diet, or impaired use of food by the body.

Physicians will often recommend that a person follow a special (therapeutic) 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 person’s health (ex. -low sodium (salt) diet to help with fluid retention in heart disease).

Assisting a client with nutritional needs is an important role of an In-Home Aide. The assistance may be in meal preparation (including cultural considerations in meal preparation as part of person centered thinking), prompting and reminding the client to eat, assisting the client to eat (including cutting food, opening containers), and other tasks involved in eating to ensure a client’s nutritional needs are met. The nutritional assistance may involve feeding a client -you will need education and training to ensure you understand the safety precautions in feeding assistance. Observing, Recording and Reporting (ORR) a client’s food and fluid intake is an important role of an in-home aide, especially with certain client conditions (i.e. diabetes, heart disease). More examples of areas to observe, record, and report are- swallowing difficulties the client experiences, lack of food in the client’s home, decrease in food or fluid intake, a client refusing to eat or drink, not following therapeutic diet recommendations, and other areas related to a client’s nutrition.

When shopping for a client, it is important to read all of the labels on a food package before purchasing. Labels often have information regarding expiration or use-by date of the product, proper handling/cooking, and nutritional information. Food allergy information will be printed on the package for those who have food allergies. It is important that you be aware of any food allergies a client may have.

When assisting clients with food selection, try to help them make healthy choices. Specifically, look closely at saturated fat content, sodium content, and expiration dates. From the Meeting Your MyPlate Goals on a Budget publication from the USDA “Buy fruits and vegetables in all their forms -fresh, frozen, and canned. Fresh, frozen, and canned are all nutritious forms of fruits and vegetables. In fact, canned and frozen produce is typically picked and packed at its peak, when it’s chock-full of nutrients. It also lasts longer than fresh, which can cut down on the amount you waste. Try these tips for choosing wisely with fresh, frozen, and canned: • Buy fresh produce when it’s in season. It will cost less and taste better than out-of-season produce. • Buy canned or frozen produce year-round. Look for veggies that have not been pre-sauced and say “no salt added,” “low sodium,” or “reduced sodium.” Look for fruits canned in 100% fruit juice, light syrup, or water. Choose lean proteins and vary your protein food choices.” Follow the plan of care for your client’s dietary needs and/or special diet preparation. Ask for further education and training as needed.

Learning Objectives:
*Define Nutrition
*Define nutrients
*The importance of hydration
*Factors affecting nutrition
*Review USDA MyPlate

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Physiological and/or Psychological Factors Which May affect a Client’s Nutritional Practices:

- **Physiological:**
  - Decreased saliva production or a sore mouth
  - Loose dentures, gum disease, missing teeth, or other dental problems
  - Prolonged digestion
  - Increase in indigestion
  - Constipation
  - Decreased appetite
  - Decreased taste
  - Difficulty swallowing
  - Decreased smell
  - Low energy level due to certain illnesses where chewing may be exhausting

- **Psychological:**
  - Depression
  - Loss of interest in eating
  - No longer receives joy in eating or from food
  - Forgetfulness

Preparing Food and Food Safety:

- The goal in preparing food for a client is to promote the client’s nutrition according to the plan of care.
- Preparing food that the client can eat and desires is the goal.
- Use cooking methods that will preserve color and taste, as well as vitamins and minerals.
- Try to offer a variety in meals.
- If the choice of available foods is limited, prepare the food in different ways (i.e. potatoes can be baked, mashed, boiled, etc. and can be served hot, cold, and in stews and soups).
- For food safety- avoid cross contamination by keeping raw meats and poultry separate from other foods. Wash all work surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils, and hands after touching raw meat or poultry.
- Cook food thoroughly. Meat and poultry should be fully cooked. Hamburgers should not be pink on the inside.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold until serving.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables before cooking or serving.

“Eating healthy is a journey shaped by many factors, including our stage of life, situations, preferences, access to food, culture, traditions, and the personal decisions we make over time. All your food and beverage choices count. MyPlate illustrates the five food groups that are the building blocks for a healthy diet using a familiar image- a place setting for a meal. Before you eat, think about what goes on your plate, in your cup, or in your bowl”. (United States Department of Agriculture-USDA ChooseMyPlate.gov).

SEE PAGES 4 AND 5 OF THE NEWSLETTER FOR AN INFOGRAPHIC ON MYPLATE FROM THE USDA

To learn about meeting MyPlate goals on a budget, go to-

Nutrients, Water and Hydration:

- **Protein** is essential for tissue growth and repair. It is important for clients with skin breakdown to have a lot of protein in their diets (unless on a therapeutic low protein diet). Protein helps to form antibodies that defend the body against disease. Protein also serves as another form of energy for the body. Good sources of protein include fish, poultry, meat, eggs, milk, cheese, nuts and dried beans.

- **Carbohydrates** supply the body with fuel to meet the body’s energy needs. Carbohydrates also provide fiber which aids in digestion. Carbohydrates are broken down into two categories: complex carbohydrates and simple carbohydrates. During digestion, carbohydrates are broken down into sugars which are absorbed into the blood.

- **Fat** helps the body store energy. It also helps to provide the body with insulation and helps to protect the organs. Fat also helps the body to maintain a healthy nervous system. Examples of fat are animal fats found in meat, butter, oil, etc.

- **Vitamins** cannot be produced by the body and can only be obtained in food. Important vitamins to get each day are: Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B3, Vitamin D, and Thiamin.

- **Minerals** assist with various chemical reactions in the body. Examples of minerals include: Iron, Sodium, Potassium, Calcium, and Phosphorus.

- **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 (there may be times a client is to limit fluids due to a medical condition, follow the instructions on the plan of care). Infants and young children need more water than adults do. Maintaining fluid balance is essential for good health. A lot of home care clients will be at risk of dehydration. Dehydration is a serious situation when a person does not take in enough fluid for the body causing a decrease in amount of water in tissue.

- 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 to monitor the client for 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. Offer fluids throughout the day - leave fluids within reach of the client unless they have a fluid restriction. Always check with your supervisor to make sure that your client does not have any dietary or fluid restrictions.

- If your client has had a stroke, it may be difficult for them to swallow liquids. You may have to thicken their liquids before consumption. You will need special instruction from your supervisor as to the amount of thickeners needed. There are various degrees of thickeners. If the client has difficulty swallowing, have the client sit upright, slightly forward, with the chin tilted down, if their condition permits. Have the client lower the chin during the swallowing process. A speech-language therapist may be part of the team to teach clients’ techniques to help improve swallowing. Follow the plan of care regarding how to assist client’s with swallowing difficulties.