Nutrition Risk Factors

DREAM
Dementia Resources for Eating Activity & Meaningful Inclusion

In this factsheet, you will learn about:

Factors that make it difficult for people living with dementia to get, prepare, and consume the foods and beverages they need for their health.

Personal and behavioural risk factors

- Difficulty deciding and/or knowing what to eat and drink to be healthy
- Forgetting when or if they have already eaten or drank
- Trouble getting food and beverages, such as forgetting that they need groceries, or becoming overwhelmed while at the store
- Challenges with preparing food and beverages, such as difficulty following recipes or trouble using kitchen appliances
- Mealtime challenges, such as staying focused with the task at hand, or leaving the table before the meal is over
- Diet changes, such as diet modifications due to diagnosis, changes in food likes and dislikes, or limited access to cultural or familiar foods as a newcomer

Social and cultural risk factors

- Social isolation, depression, and/or grief
- Limited access to social supports and social mealtime interactions, such as family or friends living far away, or only a few community services available locally

Medical risk factors

- Medications affecting taste, appetite, and/or metabolism
- Co-morbid medical conditions like gastrointestinal disorders, cancer, or diabetes

Physical and sensory risk factors

- Appetite changes (increased or decreased)
- Altered taste, smell, and/or vision
- Loss of teeth and/or gum pain
- Mobility limitations and/or problems with coordination
- Challenges while eating or drinking, such as difficulty chewing or swallowing

Financial risk factors

- Low income and/or high cost of food and beverages

Environmental and geographical risk factors

- Limited or no transportation (such as, personal vehicle or public transit)
- Difficulty accessing healthy or culturally appropriate foods
  - Living far from a grocery store in a rural or northern community
  - Harsh seasonal and/or road conditions
  - Limited nutritious or culturally familiar options available at the grocery store or convenience store