

# Adult Day Self-Care Newsletter

October 2022

## Harvest Time: Eat Well!

As fall arrives in New Jersey, the weather changes. Farmers and gardeners prepare for winter. This is a great time to find the last of the harvest at local farmers' markets. Before the days of big trucks and effective refrigeration, harvest festivals were common. Fall was a time to give thanks for food, to celebrate the change in seasons and the change in workload, and to enjoy community. In modern times, fall is a chance to try new and different foods that you don't eat often. For example, try leeks, kale, all the many kinds of winter squash, and parsnips after the first frost. Remember that a healthy diet is built on a foundation of fruits and vegetables! Many people think of "diet" as an approach to weight loss. But "diet" simply means what you eat—especially what you usually eat week after week. Food is your fuel! You wouldn't fill your car's gas tank with water and sand, because you know it won't run on that. Your body also needs the right kind of fuel to do what you want it to do. Recent research is discovering that what we eat also affects our emotional health and our cognitive health. This issue is focused on eating well—how food can help you manage stress and keep your brain healthy. Enjoy!

## Eating Well for Stress Management

Stress is often described as the feeling that the demands being made on us are greater than the resources we have to meet them. Long-term stress wears us down, causing health problems.

Stress shows itself in many ways—tension, anxiety, increases in blood pressure, sweating, and changes in eating. When stressed, you might overeat, reach for unhealthy foods, skip a meal, or just grab whatever is available. Stress eating (or not eating when you feel stressed) contributes to feeling bad physically and emotionally.

Packable and easy-to-eat foods like fruit and nuts can be great go-to foods when you feel stressed. Plan ahead! Make or buy one-portion bags of snacks to help you avoid less healthy options.

Watch the caffeine! Coffee or tea (in moderation) can be a healthy choice, but too much caffeine contributes to anxiety, sleep problems, and greater stress. Look out for hidden caffeine in some pain meds and non-cola soft drinks, too.



Remind yourself of the “whys” of eating well: Self-care is critical if you are going to be able to care for others, to stay well, and to be able to do all the things you enjoy.

Mind the clock. As the day goes on, people are more and more likely to overeat, especially when stressed. Eating late in the day also can interfere with sleep.

Strengthen other stress management habits: Get plenty of sleep, exercise, relax, use meditation and mindfulness strategies.

## Eating and Dementia

As memory loss progresses, people have different challenges with eating. In the early stages, typically before a person attends an Adult Day Center, eating is less of a problem than managing meal prep and shopping.

In the middle stages, people may experience changes in sense of smell and taste. These can cause changes in food preferences. Apathy or distractions may cause a lack of interest in eating, or someone may think they have already eaten.

In later stages, people may experience difficulty chewing and swallowing. This may cause coughing or choking. Increased difficulties with using utensils means extra help or special tools (like fat-handled spoons) may be needed.

As with other situations, Adult Day Staff need to be patient and flexible, making adjustments as needed. Reducing distractions and offering limited choices and help.

Culturally-tailored meals<sup>1</sup> also may help with good nutrition and quality of life when Adult Day Centers serve a diverse community.

## Preventing Alzheimer's Disease

Recent research suggests the MIND Diet<sup>2</sup> may help maintain brain health and cognitive functioning. Based on both the Mediterranean Diet and the DASH diet, this approach to eating emphasizes whole grains, dark greens, more vegetables, nuts, and beans or legumes.

<sup>1</sup> Sadarangani, T. et al. (2021). A qualitative analysis of the deliver of person-centered nutrition to Asian Americans with dementia in the adult day health care setting. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 40(2), 179-188.

<sup>2</sup> For an infographic on the MIND Diet, see the Pacific Neuroscience Institute [website](#). For a press release on the research supporting the diet's results, see the Rush University [website](#). For a research summary, visit the [National Institute of Aging](#).

## For More Information

You can find our COPSA brochure on nutrition on our [website](#) (a free download) to share with your staff and with family caregivers.

For a list of resources on nutrition and feeding issues, visit the USDA [website](#).

For more on stress eating, see the American Psychological Association [website](#) and the Johns Hopkins Medicine [website](#).

## Care2Caregivers: New Website

Check out our new and improved [website](#)! You can find the [Adult Day Resources pages](#) through the drop-down menu in the Professional Resources section of the website.

If you're not getting our weekly affirmations, please contact us so we can add you to our list!

As always, you can access the Self-Care resources on our website for free. Use our NEW link:

**Self-Care for Professional Caregivers**  
<https://care2caregivers.com/professional-resources/self-care/>

### Upcoming Caregiver Education 2022

**Eat Well to BE Well: Supporting Nutrition & Ease at Mealtime**  
October 19, 2022 1:00pm  
Click [HERE](#) to register

**Celebrating National Family Caregiver Month: "Caregiving Around the Clock"**  
November 10, 2022 1:00pm  
Click [HERE](#) to register

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or call Care2Caregivers at 890-424-2494



visit our website [www.care2caregivers.com](http://www.care2caregivers.com) for information on caregiver support groups

**1-800-424-2494**