

Quick Tips For Alzheimer's-Friendly Foods During Hot Weather

With summer here and temperatures rising, caregivers can be especially challenged in making sure that their loved ones who have dementia are getting proper nutrition and hydration.

Eating and drinking can become real problems for people with dementia especially in the middle and late stages. The person with dementia may have difficulty remembering how to use utensils, swallowing and have a poor appetite.

Preparing and serving foods that are "Alzheimer's-friendly" is one simple way to combat eating issues. Alzheimer's-friendly foods are easier to manage and don't always require utensils. They can also be eaten "on the go" and are easier to swallow. Many caregivers have found that a little bit of "sweet" helps to also stimulate the appetite.

If swallowing or choking issues are a concern, speak with your loved one's medical professional for help with these issues and then call the Alzheimer's Association for some additional caregiver tips.

Alzheimer's friendly food ideas:

Liquids

Popsicles
Ice cream
Juices
Frozen juice bars
Water-rich melons and fruits
Applesauce
Lemonade
Milkshakes
Fruit smoothies
Chocolate- or strawberry-flavored milk

Solids (finger-friendly foods)

Cold sandwich (cut up into bite-sized pieces)
Pizza (cut up into bite-sized pieces)
Chicken fingers and chicken nuggets
Tofu cubes
Hardboiled egg, cut up
Fresh or cooked vegetables in strips with salad dressing
Graham crackers, wheat crackers
Pretzels, bread sticks
French toast strips
Cereal
Toasted or grilled cheese sandwich
Cheese cubes
Puddings
Jello (Jigglers, squares)

Prepared by:

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TECHNIQUES FOR PREVENTION OF DEHYDRATION

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Professionally, I am writing this paper as a specialist in critical care nutrition. Personally, I am contributing information based upon extensive knowledge on this topic: My mother has Alzheimer's, and I have found her to be in severe dehydration twice in the past 10 months.

Background:

More advanced Alzheimer's patients may have difficulty with the basic life functions of chewing and swallowing. Liquids may be of particular difficulty. In the case of my mother, she appears to have a protrusion reflex of an infant, expelling food and liquid out of the mouth, instead of propelling them back via her tongue. Such actions have resulted in the bouts of severe dehydration.

Solutions:

1. Position:

While in the hospital, I tried feeding her in a 90-degree position in a "cardiac chair". What a difference the position made with both intake of solids and liquids. Obviously, it is consistent with the flow of gravity. We now feed her exclusively in a cardiac chair at home and her hydration is excellent.

2. Semi-solids:

She does best on liquids and solid foods liquefied in a blender or food processor of a mechanical consistency. This principle is used to deliver both fluids and potassium. *For example:* She received hot cereal cooked in water (i.e. Cream of Wheat) at least for one meal per day. Through this, she automatically obtains around 240 CC (approx. 8 oz.) of water.

In between meals, she receives "natural" orange jello: Knox Unflavored Gelatin is prepared with orange juice and banana slice (basic recipe on box). This alone adds around 500 cc (approx. 16 oz.) of fluid each day, as well as nearly 1 gram of potassium.

3. Foods prepared with water:

Cooked fruits, vegetables, boiled potatoes, and pasta are added regularly to her daily diet as a way to increase the overall fluid intake.

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