

Nutritional Risks: The Warning Signs

Two of five seniors who live alone (44%) have at least four warning signs of poor nutritional health such as eating alone, taking multiple medications and illness, according to research conducted for the Home Instead Senior Care® network.

Following, from the Home Instead Senior Care network and Sandy Markwood, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a), are warning indicators that a senior could be in trouble.



- 1. The loneliness.** More than three-fourths (76%) of seniors who live alone eat alone most of the time, according to Home Instead Senior Care network research. **Suggestion:** Try to make sure your older loved one has companionship at home or in a congregate meal site.
- 2. The multiple meds.** Nearly three-fourths (71%) of seniors take three or more different medications a day, according to research. **Suggestion:** Talk to your senior's health care team about how medications might be impacting your older adult's appetite and discuss with them what to do about it.
- 3. The lack of healthy staples.** For a number of reasons, important staples for a good diet are not always found in a senior's kitchen. **Suggestion:** Talk with your older loved one about their favorite recipes – or yours – that incorporate healthy products.
- 4. The illness.** Many older adults are struggling with health conditions that impact eating. **Suggestion:** Discovering favorite recipes from the recipe box and making mealtime a social event may help.
- 5. The physical problems.** A fourth of seniors who live alone – 25% – can't always get to the grocery store any more, nor can they shop or cook for themselves. **Suggestion:** Tap into neighbors and compassionate friends. Call your local Area Agency on Aging Office or Home Instead Senior Care.
- 6. That smelly fridge.** Check out expiration dates of food in the refrigerator when you're visiting a loved one. Have you noticed an increase in spoiled food? **Suggestion:** Package food in small portions and label in big letters with the date.
- 7. The suspicious grocery list.** If you go to the store for Mom, and the list is mostly sweets, then she may be headed in the wrong direction with her diet. **Suggestion:** Help her put together a grocery list, reminding her of all the wonderful foods she used to cook for you.
- 8. Those important details.** When you're visiting a senior, check out things like skin tone – it should be healthy looking and well-hydrated – as well as any weight fluctuations. **Suggestion:** A visit to the doctor can help ensure your senior is healthy.
- 9. The empty cupboard.** An emergency could trap a loved one home for days. **Suggestion:** Prepare by stocking back-up food, water and high-nutrition products such as Ensure® in case a trip to the store isn't possible.
- 10. The support.** Isolation is one of the biggest threats to an older adult. **Suggestion:** Encourage your loved one to invite friends to dinner. If you can't be there, develop a schedule of friends and neighbors who can stop by for lunch or dinner. Or call your local Home Instead Senior Care office for assistance.

For more information about the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, go to www.n4a.org.
Learn about the Home Instead Senior Care network's Craving CompanionshipSM program at www.mealsandcompanionship.com or contact your local Home Instead Senior Care office.