



Older Adult Clients - Geriatric Care

The dietitian specializing in caring for elderly people is vital to their well-being and in some cases, their survival. Aging affects physiological and psychosocial well-being and economic status. These changes can influence the nutritional balance and increase the risk for malnutrition. Routine screening and assessments are important for elderly people in hospitals, long-term or chronic care facilities and for frail elderly adults living at home.

The dietitian's goals for nutrition intervention for elderly people include:

- Improving or maintaining nutritional health and quality of life;
- Improving or treating nutrition related problems associated with aging.

The following are some of the common nutrition related health problems in the elderly that are associated with improved health outcomes when they received proper nutritional care:

- Dehydration
- Malnutrition
- Dysphagia or swallowing difficulties
- Oral Health Problems
- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular disease
- Cancer
- Osteoporosis
- Pressure Ulcers or bed sores

Research has shown that the assessment of the older adult requires different tools from other adults. In addition, attention has to be paid to certain nutrients such as:

- Energy
- Protein for building muscles and tissue
- Fats and essential fatty acids
- Vitamins and minerals such as vitamin D, vitamin B and calcium
- Fluids

Dietitians working in the field of geriatrics often report it to be a very rewarding experience. As with any area of practice, dietitians have specialized knowledge and skills through experience and their own practice-based research. Some educational institutions such as [Ryerson University](#) offer certificate programs in Geriatrics.