

# Determine Your Nutritional Health

The Warning Signs of poor nutritional health are often over-looked. Use this checklist to find out if you or someone you know is at nutritional risk.

Read the statements below. Check Yes or No. For each yes answer, score the number in the box. Total your nutritional score.

YES NO

1.	I have an illness/condition that made me change the kind and/or amount of food I eat.	2	
2.	I eat fewer than 2 meals per day.	3	
3.	I eat few fruits or vegetables, or milk products.	2	
4.	I have 3 or more drinks of beer, liquor or wine almost every day.	2	
5.	I have tooth or mouth problems that make it hard for me to eat.	2	
6.	I don't always have enough money to buy the food I need.	4	
7.	I eat alone most of the time.	1	
8.	I take 3 or more different prescribed or over-the-counter drugs a day.	1	
9.	Without wanting to, I have lost or gained 10 pounds in the last 6 months.	2	
10.	I am not always physically able to shop, cook and/or feed myself.	2	

Your Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Sex: M  F

Your Ethnic Background:

- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian Pacific Islander
- Afro-American, not of Hispanic Origin
- Hispanic
- Caucasian /White

Total Your Nutritional Score. If It's \_\_\_\_\_

**0-2 Good!** Recheck your nutritional score in 6 months.

**3-5 You are at moderate nutritional risk.**

See what you can do to improve your eating habits and lifestyle. Your Office for the Aging, senior nutrition program, senior center or health department can help. Recheck your nutritional score in 3 months.

**6 or more You are at high nutritional risk.**

Bring this checklist and talk to your doctor, dietitian or other health or social service professional. Ask for help to improve your nutritional health.

**Remember that warning signs suggest risk, but are not a diagnosis of any condition. Turn the page to learn more about the Warning Signs of poor nutritional health.**

**The Nutrition Checklist is based on the Warning Signs described below.  
Use the word DETERMINE to remind you of the Warning Signs**

## **DISEASE**

Any disease, illness or chronic condition which causes you to change the way you eat, or makes it hard for you to eat, puts your nutritional health at risk. Four out of five adults have chronic diseases that are affected by diet. Confusion or memory loss that keeps getting worse is estimated to affect one out of five or more of older adults. This can make it hard to remember what, when or if you've eaten. Feeling sad or depressed, which happens to about one in eight older adults, can cause big changes in appetite, digestion, energy level, weight and well-being.

## **EATING POORLY**

Eating too little and eating too much both lead to poor health. Eating the same foods day after day or not eating fruit, vegetables, and milk products daily will also cause poor nutritional health. One in five adults skip meals daily. Only 13% of adults eat the minimum amount of fruit and vegetables needed. One in four older adults drink too much alcohol. Many health problems become worse if you drink more than one or two alcoholic beverages per day.

## **TOOTH LOSS/MOUTH PAIN**

A healthy mouth, teeth and gums are needed to eat. Missing, loose or rotten teeth or dentures which don't fit well or cause mouth sores make it hard to eat.

## **ECONOMIC HARDSHIP**

As many as 40% of older Americans have incomes of less than \$6,000 per year. Having less - - or choosing to spend less - - than \$25-30 per week for food makes it very hard to get the foods you need to stay healthy.

## **REDUCED SOCIAL CONTACT**

One-third of all older people live alone. Being with people daily has a positive effect on morale, well-being and eating.

## **MULTIPLE MEDICINES**

Many older Americans must take medicines for health problems. Almost half of older Americans take multiple medicines daily. Growing old may change the way we respond to drugs. The more medicines you take, the greater the chance for side effects such as increased or decreased appetite, change in taste, constipation, weakness, drowsiness, diarrhea, nausea, and others. Vitamins or minerals when taken in large doses act like drugs and can cause harm. Alert your doctor to everything you take.

## **INVOLUNTARY WEIGHT LOSS/GAIN**

Losing or gaining a lot of weight when you are not trying to do so is an important warning sign that must not be ignored. Being overweight or underweight also increases your chance of poor health.

## **NEEDS ASSISTANCE IN SELF CARE**

Although most older people are able to eat, one of every five have trouble walking, shopping, buying and cooking food, especially as they get older.

## **ELDER YEARS ABOVE AGE 80**

Most older people lead full and productive lives. But as age increases, risk of frailty and health problems increase. Checking your nutritional health regularly makes good sense.