



Caregiver Tip of the Month – February 2012

Notes from Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho

Nutrition, Weight loss, Appetite loss and Hydration

February is National Heart Month, so it's beneficial to highlight what makes a healthy heart. Strong hearts and minds are fueled by nutritious meals which include low fat, low cholesterol and low salt and diets rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains and dairy products. Beans and fish provide good protein and healthy Omega 3. Look for "partially hydrogenated" fats, avoiding saturated fats and trans fat.

While many of us are trying to lose some extra pounds, unwanted weight loss is a major problem in our elderly population. This can be due to reduced activity, diminished senses of smell and taste, depression, or medication side effects, and malnutrition can have serious consequences for the senior's health. There are a number of relatively simple techniques to stimulate appetite in the elderly – provide "favorite" meals and many small meals on a schedule. Enhance flavors and smells--additional flavorings that stimulate gastric secretions and the appetite include lemon juice, ginger, vinegar and bitter herbs. Cranberries are a good addition. Have bedtime snacks. Food that is room temperature or cool may be more appealing. Keep up regular moderate exercise and include supplement drinks. Avoid liquids 30 min. before and after a meal. However, dehydration is more prominent in the elderly as the thirst sensation decreases with aging, so dehydration can affect cognitive function. Frequent encouragement to drink small amounts and offering a wide variety of beverages can be extremely important.

Watch for our Medication Management Training, Wednesday April 11th – 2 afternoon sessions – times TBA – CEU's available – Presenters: Lynn Johnson, R.N., Gentiva and Tim Brown, Pharmacist, Interlake Pharmacy .

Contact Betsy Bullard, Area Agency on Aging, at 667-3179, ext. 222, or email infoassist@aaani.org to find out more about these topics and other resources or visit our website at www.aaani.org.