

# Addressing The Impact Of Loneliness On Older Adults' Nutritional Habits

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ST. LOUIS -Now more than ever, we recognize the importance of human connection but few realize how a lack of connection affects our daily behaviors, especially for older adults. In fact, a survey from Home Instead, Inc. found that older adults who eat most meals alone are more than twice as likely to be lonely, leading to a poorer diet compared to those who enjoy meals in the company of others.

Additionally, more than 35% of older adults experiencing loneliness and isolation graded their diet as a C or below. In turn, 29% described their health as fair or poor. As

we return to a more familiar way of life and begin to gather again in person, Home Instead encourages family and friends to share a meal with older loved ones. Not only will it strengthen relationships, but it likely will impact the quality of food seniors consume.

## Companionship is the Best Diet

A healthy diet contributes significantly to overall physical, mental, and emotional health as we age. But many factors – including isolation and feelings of loneliness – can disrupt eating habits and lead to less nutritional choices. Research conducted by Home Instead, Inc. suggests enjoying meals with loved ones can improve overall nutrition and reduce feelings of isolation and depression.



### Eating Alone Makes a Difference

Seniors who eat most of their meals alone are more than **TWICE AS LIKELY** to feel lonely.

Seniors who feel lonely eat **14% FEWER MEALS** over the course of a year than seniors who aren't lonely.

Lonely seniors skip **224 MEALS PER YEAR** or 22% of their total meals.



### Loneliness Impacts Nutrition

Seniors who feel lonely eat **157 FEWER SERVINGS** of fruit and vegetables per year than not-lonely seniors.

**49%** of lonely seniors don't consume the right amount of calories.

**75%** of lonely seniors do not receive the right amount of at least one important element of nutrition.



### Craving Companionship

**72%** of lonely seniors wish they ate more meals with loved ones.



### Eating Alone is a Growing Trend

**50%** of seniors believe their parents ate more sit-down meals with loved ones at their current age.

**76%** of lonely seniors feel they have fewer sit-down meals with family than they used to.

For more resources and information, go to [HomeInstead.com/CompanionshipDiet](https://HomeInstead.com/CompanionshipDiet)

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“Socialization at mealtimes reduces feelings of isolation and improves nutritional intake, but the pandemic has made this increasingly difficult for seniors – impacting their overall health,” said Mark Adkisson owner of the Home Instead® office in St. Charles. “Studies show that lonely seniors skip more than 20% of their total meals, so bringing them together, especially at mealtime, can increase healthy longevity.”

To improve mealtime habits and promote connection, Home Instead offices serving St. Charles, St. Louis, and the surrounding areas are introducing Companionship Diet, a free program designed to demonstrate the health benefits of enjoying meals together and offer educational resources to make more informed nutritional choices. Included in the program are recipes, tips, and resources designed to inspire seniors and family caregivers to make healthier choices and spend quality time together preparing and sharing nutritious meals.

Adkisson provides tips on how families can include older adults during mealtime:

1. **Involve your loved one in the preparation process.** If they are up for it, ask your loved one to help with making the meal. Perhaps they can help mash the potatoes or frost the cake. If your loved one doesn't want to help with meal preparation, he or she can sit and chat while you're cooking and help provide instructions or share old family recipes and stories. These moments can serve as valuable bonding time.
2. **Plan simple and healthy meals.** Check-in with older adults before dinner and ask them to select a favorite recipe that you could make. Even better, ask them for their favorite childhood foods and incorporate them into mealtime. Meals should be balanced and include grains, fruits, and veggies. Canned veggies can still be healthy and are a good alternative if fresh ones aren't available. Remember to be mindful of portion size with seniors.
3. **Schedule regular mealtimes.** Plan to get together weekly or monthly to enjoy a meal with older loved ones. Ask your loved one what ingredients they like and what dishes they prefer to involve them at every step. This will help keep seniors engaged and give them something to look forward to.

Anyone can play a role in ensuring the aging population continues to feel connected as the pandemic wanes. With Companionship Diet Home Instead demonstrates the impact personal connections and casual conversations during mealtime can have on the physical and emotional health of older adults.

These resources, and additional information about Companionship Diet, can be found at [www.HomeInstead.com/CompanionshipDiet](http://www.HomeInstead.com/CompanionshipDiet). Or contact your local Home Instead office at 888-331-1023.

**ABOUT HOME INSTEAD**

*Founded in 1994 in Omaha, Nebraska, the Home Instead® franchise network provides personalized care, support, and education to enhance the lives of aging adults and their families. Today, the network is the world's leading provider of in-home care services for older adults, with more than 1,200 independently owned and operated franchises that provide nearly 90 million hours of care annually throughout the United States and 13 other countries. Local Home Instead offices employ approximately 100,000 CAREGivers<sup>SM</sup> worldwide who provide relationship-based care services that enable older adults to live safely and comfortably in their own homes for as long as possible. Home Instead franchise owners partner with clients and their family members to help meet varied individual needs. Services span the care continuum – from providing personal care to specialized Alzheimer's care and hospice support. Also available are family caregiver education and support resources. Visit [HomeInstead.com](http://HomeInstead.com). Connect with us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/homeinstead) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/homeinstead). Each Home Instead® franchise office is independently owned and operated. Home Instead, Inc. is a subsidiary of Honor Technology, Inc. For more information, visit [joinhonor.com](http://joinhonor.com).*