

# Unintentional Weight Loss in Older Adults

## How do I know if I'm losing weight or not eating well?

If your clothes are getting loose, it could be a sign you are losing weight. Any of the following could mean you aren't eating well:

- You have an illness that makes you change the kind or amount of food you eat
- You eat fewer than two meals per day
- You don't eat a lot of fruits, vegetables, or milk products
- You have three or more alcoholic drinks almost every day
- You have tooth or mouth problems that make it hard for you to eat
- You don't always have enough money to buy the food you need
- You eat alone most of the time
- You take at least three different prescription or over-the-counter medicines per day
- Without wanting to, you have lost or gained 10 lb in the past six months
- You can't always shop, cook, or feed yourself without help

## When should I worry about the weight I've lost?

If you are older than 65 years, you should see your doctor if you lose 5% of your body weight over six to 12 months without trying.

## What can I do to stop losing weight?

- Drink nutrition shakes (examples are Boost and Ensure) 90 minutes before meals to help increase the amount of calories you are getting.
- Put flavor enhancers, such as ham, natural bacon, or roast beef flavor, on your food; this may help you to eat more.
- Avoid eating alone.
- If the cost of or access to food is a problem, ask your doctor about resources that can help you.

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**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.**

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