

Helping  
older Iowans  
stay healthy  
and independent

# The Congregate Nutrition Program



**Good nutrition supports wellness and independence**

August 2012

## **Older Iowans want to maintain independence and continue living in their homes.**



Good nutrition is one of the major determinants of successful aging.

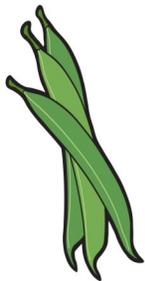
- Reduces the risk of disabilities related to chronic illnesses
- Supports better mental and physical functioning

## **Malnourished adults face a host of poor health outcomes,**



including limitations in activities of daily living (ADLs) and reduced ability to care for themselves. Over the past decade, there has been an increase in senior hunger which will likely lead to additional nutritional, health and fiscal challenges for Iowa. Malnutrition can reduce the ability for self-care, compromise the immune system and increase susceptibility to infection. This can translate to a host of other problems including more illnesses, fall-related injuries, slow recovery times and more frequent hospitalizations. Mental status can be impacted by low nutrient intakes such as vitamin B-12.

## **The Older American Act Nutrition Program ,**



administered by the Iowa Department on Aging through local area agencies on aging, is a health and wellness program. It makes a difference in the lives of older Iowans and is a key home and community based foundation service with a history of documented successes. Participants in the program improve their nutritional status with menus that are planned using federal evidence-based guidelines. National evaluation found that for congregate meal participants, one meal served provides the following percent of the participant's daily intake:

46% of the meat/protein foods | 62% of grain products | 35% of recommended fruit

**Meals are available to individuals 60 years or older or a spouse of any age.**

**Qualified individuals have the option of contributing to the cost of the meal.**

## **Nutrition Program has a Role in Transitional Care**

A 70 year old man was discharged to his home following a week in the hospital to treat congestive heart failure. While in the hospital he received a low sodium diet and lost 10 pounds of excess fluid. He took a cab to his apartment where he lived alone. Lacking a supply of food and energy to shop, he ordered in pizza and Chinese food. These high sodium foods contributed to fluid retention, leading to shortness of breath and readmission to the hospital. Receiving a home delivered meal or transportation to a congregate meal site could have prevented this readmission as the meals are nutritious and lower in sodium.

## Participants have improved nutritional status

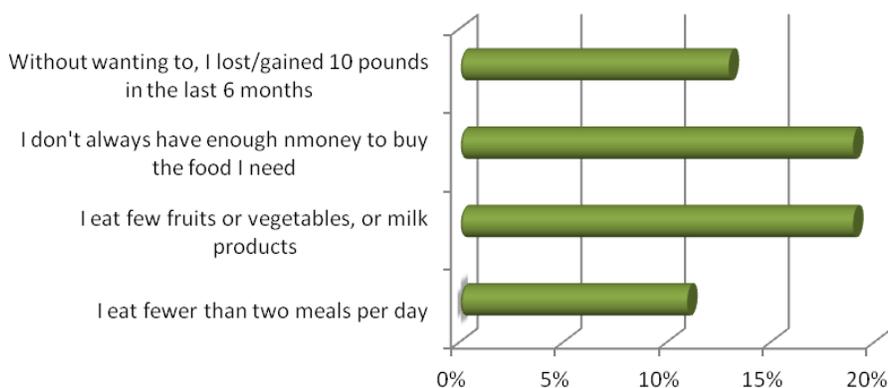


The DETERMINE Checklist is used to identify nutrition risk for all Older American Act programs. A high score signifies risk for malnutrition. Each screening question has suggested interventions. The Iowa nutrition programs provide nutrition education and referrals for high risk meal participants and improvement in nutrition risk scores has been documented.

**21%** of Iowa congregate nutrition program participants have been identified as high nutrition risk.

**84%** of the high risk group improved or maintained their nutrition risk scores.

### Percentage of IMPROVEMENTS in scores



Iowa high nutrition risk congregate meal participants have three or more limitations in their activities of daily living (ADLs) which would qualify them for nursing facility care. Participating in the congregate meal program gets them out of the house for a nutritious meal and provides needed socialization, health promotion activities and information on services that will keep them in their homes.

## The Affordable Care Act and Transition Care

requires health care facilities to provide for the needs of patients as they transition from one care setting to another. As hospital stays become shorter, many patients are finding themselves discharged to home without the services they need to recuperate. Unfortunately, 50% of older adults discharged from the hospital are malnourished. Meal programs are part of a cost effective wellness plan that can help with recuperation. For individuals without caregivers and unable to shop or cook, having a nutritious meal delivered to their home or provided at congregate meal sites may help speed recovery and keep older Iowans in the least restrictive environment at the lowest cost.

## DETERMINE Checklist

I have an illness or condition that made me change the kind and/or amount of food I eat. (2)

I eat fewer than 2 meals per day (3)

I eat few fruits or vegetables or milk products (2)

I have 3+ drinks of beer, liquor or wine almost every day (2)

I have tooth or mouth problems that make it hard for me to eat. (2)

I don't always have enough money to buy the food I need (4)

I eat alone most of the time (1)

I take 3+ different prescribed or over the counter drugs a day (1)

Without wanting to, I have lost or gained 10 pounds in the last 6 months.(2)

I am not always physically able to shop, cook and/or feed myself (2)

A score of 6+ indicates high nutrition risk and further evaluation is indicated.



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