



# Unplanned weight loss

Information for people living in or visiting the residential aged care facility

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Unplanned weight loss is losing weight when you are not trying to.

It can make you feel weak and tired and can lead to serious health problems.

Unplanned weight loss can cause you to get more infections, pressure injuries (sores), confusion and you may be more likely to go to hospital.

Sometimes weight loss can't be avoided due to serious illness but for many of us there are ways to prevent it.

## Signs you may be at risk of losing weight

- You have problems swallowing.
- Your mouth or teeth hurt.
- You have lost your appetite.
- Your taste and smell change.
- You feel sick and have nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.
- You don't enjoy food.
- You feel depressed.
- You have stomach pain that stops you from eating.

## Ways to prevent unplanned weight loss

- Tell staff what foods you like, and when you like to eat.
- Eat with other people. Invite your family and friends to join you.
- If you have visitors during mealtimes, make sure you still eat.
- Tell staff if you have trouble eating so they can help you.
- If you have swallowing problems, you may need to see a speech pathologist. Let the staff know if swallowing is difficult for you.



- You can learn ways to make eating and drinking easier and safer.
- A dietitian can tell you about food you like that will keep you healthy.
- Have your medicines checked, as they can sometimes cause loss of appetite or weight loss.
- See a dentist if your teeth or mouth are sore.
- If you wear dentures, make sure they fit and are comfortable.

## Working together

You, your family and friends are important members of the care team. You know what is normal for you.

Tell staff if you notice changes or feel unwell. Let them know if you have lost your appetite or think you are losing weight and your clothes are getting too big.

Don't wait to see if you get better – it's always best to get help early.

Working together with staff will help keep you healthy and out of hospital.

Talk to staff and ask questions. They need your input to give you the best care.

## Questions to ask staff

- Are my medicines affecting my appetite?
- Should I see a dietitian or speech pathologist?
- Should I see a dentist?
- How much weight have I lost?



## Want to know more?

Read about healthy eating over the age of 60 on the [Healthdirect Australia website](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/healthy-eating-over-60) <<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/healthy-eating-over-60>>.

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Available from the [Department of Health residential aged care information web page](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/residential-aged-care/participating-with-consumers)

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