

Eating: help during meals

3. TOOLS FOR QUALIFIED WORK IN THE HOME CARE



Created by the Region of Emilia-Romagna

Health and Social Policies General Management - Service for the Planning and Development of the Social and Healthcare Services - Area for the Elderly and Disabled Persons as part of the integrated project services supporting the regularisation and qualification of domestic caregivers of the elderly and the disabled

Booklet texts drafted with the collaboration of:

Federica Aleotti *Psychologist - Local National Health Service Unit (AUSL) of Reggio Emilia*

Maria Grazia Battistini *Social Worker - Municipality of Cesena (FC)*

Silvia Bellettini *Supervisor of Assistance Activities - Elderly Health Care Service (SAA) of Modena*

Susanna Beltrami *Supervisor of Assistance Activities - Elderly Health Care Service (SAA) of Modena*

Andrea Fabbo *Geriatrician - Local National Health Service Unit (AUSL) of Modena, District of Mirandola (MO)*

Agnese Fabbri *Nurse - Geriatrics Hospital Unit - long-term hospital unit for Post-acute Phases and Extensive Rehabilitation - St. Orsola-Malpighi hospital of Bologna*

Diana Gavioli *Health-care Assistant - Local National Health Service Unit (AUSL) of Modena, District of Mirandola (MO)*

Saadia Lafhimi *Cultural-linguistic coordinator - "Mosaico" Equal Opportunity Committee, Bazzano area (BO)*

Letizia Lambertini *Coordinator of the "Mosaico" Equal Opportunity Committee, Bazzano area (BO)*

**Y commissione pari opportunità
mosaico zona bazzanese**



Eliana Lombardi *Rehabilitation therapist - Geriatrics Hospital Unit - long-term hospital unit for Post-acute Phases and Extensive Rehabilitation - St. Orsola-Malpighi hospital of Bologna*

Mohammed Louhui *President of AMIL - Association of cultural-linguistic coordinators of Bologna*

Marinella Richeldi *Coordinator in charge of the Social Services of Modena*

Eros Rilievo *Supervisor of social services area - Modena-Training (MO)*

Sara Saltarelli *Social Worker - Social Services Cooperative (Cooperativa Sociale) "Dolce" of Bologna*

Chiara Scarlini *Social Worker - Municipality of Mirandola (MO)*

Roberta Sordelli *Head Nurse, Surgery Hospital Unit - Hospital of Bazzano (BO)*

Project Superintendent:

Simonetta Puglioli *Area for the Elderly and the Disabled, Region of Emilia-Romagna*

Translations, illustrations and printing by:

Tracce s.r.l.

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<http://www.emiliaromagnasociale.it> - click on elderly (anziani).

Eating: help during meals

Elements of hygiene and safety with foods

(storage and preparation)

All homes are now equipped with gas stoves and with refrigerators. In our climate zones, these two appliances are indispensable to ward off (unfortunately not always) the **risk of infection** (rischio di infezioni) from foods.

Before you begin to prepare meals that may or may not be complex, you should wash your hands thoroughly. The surfaces on which foods will rest should be cleaned repeatedly without leaving any traces of dishwashing liquid.

Dishes should be washed immediately after every meal. In addition, if possible, the waste bin should be emptied each evening so that no "food" is left for insects that would colonise the kitchen very quickly. Moisture or wet surfaces should be eliminated for the same reason.

Prior to consumption, **pasta** (pasta), **flour** (farina), **sugar** (zucchero) and **dried legumes** (legumi secchi) must be prepared and cooked, but this alone is not sufficient. Storage is also important to prevent **insect larvae** (larve di insetti) from colonising inside the packages. Therefore, large quantities of these food products should not be kept in kitchen cabinets, unless they have been vacuum-packed.

It is also best not to open more than two packages at a time, but if this should happen, use the refrigerator to store the open packages. Compared to storage in cartons or plastic containers, storage (of pasta, flour, etc.) in **glass** (vetro) jars that are closed tight can prolong the life of the products. This makes it possible to offer the person being assisted a more varied diet.

Meat (carne) and **fish** (pesce) must be kept in the refrigerator and should be eaten no later than 48 hours after purchasing them. These food products should be eaten well done.

Eggs (uova) should also be stored in the refrigerator; expiration dates are stamped on the packages. Eggs must not be eaten



raw and eggs whose origin is unknown should not be used. If there are any traces of excrement on the shells, the eggs must be thrown out. Also dispose of any eggs showing alterations in the colour or odour of the egg white or yolk.

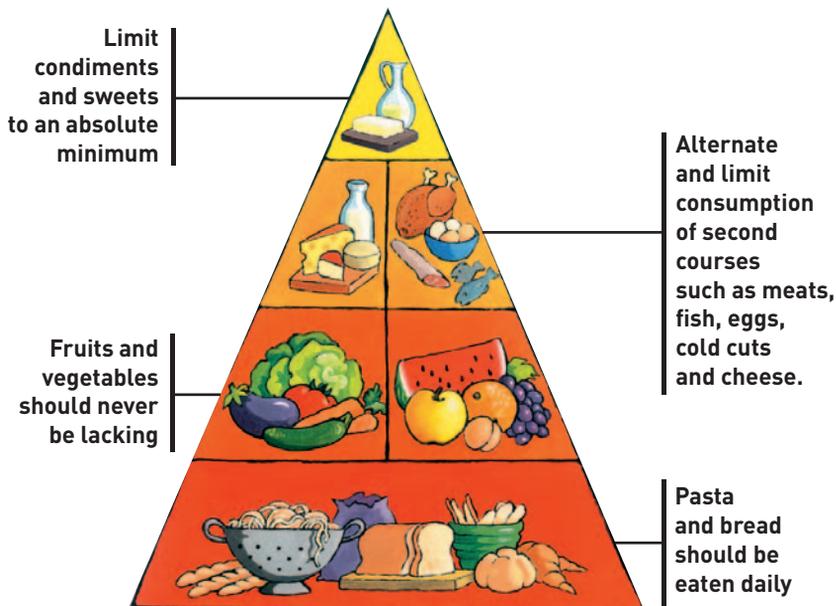
Fruit (frutta) and **vegetables** (verdura) should be eaten **raw** (crude) or **cooked** (cotte) after thorough rinsing to eliminate residue that may or may not be visible. Chlorine-based products are available on the market. Used at the right dilution, they offer a safer guarantee for the consumer's health.

Cheese (formaggio) is kept in the refrigerator and cheese should also not be eaten if its origin is not known.

Sauces (salse), **jams** (marmellate) and **foods preserved in oil** (sottoli)... In this case, it is best not to use homemade products because they could easily transmit infections that can be fatal. If jars purchased show signs of fermentation (e.g. presence of gas inside), they must be thrown out in any case.

Food groups

Our diet should be balanced and varied to prevent the risk of **deficiencies** (carenze) of nutrients that are important for our body.



To put together varied menus, the various foods have been grouped into categories and the various foods within each category are equivalent. They are therefore interchangeable. It is essential that at least one food product from each group is part of our daily diet.

1st group: meats (beef, mutton, chicken, etc.), **fish** and **eggs**, excluding vegetables. These products contain proteins and fats of animal origin, iron, Group B vitamins (particularly vitamin B12).

2nd group: milk (latte), cheese and yoghurt are food products that are rich in proteins, calcium and Group B vitamins.

3rd group: cereals (cereali) such as wheat, barley, rice, maize, etc. and **potatoes** (patate). These foods are rich in starch and thus in “sugars”, and also proteins, although the quality of the latter is poor. This food group constitutes a ready “supply of energy” for physical activity.

4th group: legumes. These are an essential source of iron, **fibre (fibre)**, which stimulates intestinal digestion, good-quality proteins and mineral salts.

5th group: This group is represented by cooking **fats** (grassi) or **condiments of animal** (bacon fat, butter, cream, lard) or **vegetal** origin (olive oil, margarine, corn, sunflower and peanut oils). Minimum amounts should be used because of their harmful effects on our health (obesity, cardiovascular disease, etc.).

6th group: green or yellow/orange fruits and greens have a high vitamin content (particularly vitamin A), and are rich in minerals and fibre (spinach, lettuce, carrots, etc.).

7th group: acidulous fruit and vegetables (e.g. cabbage and citrus fruit). They are rich in vitamin A and C, minerals and fibre.

The **number of meals per day** definitely varies from one person to another among healthy subjects. Generally speaking, it may range from three to five daily meals, depending upon personal habits and the type of occupation. Three main meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner, and one or two snacks, one in the midmorning and one in the midafternoon. The number of meals can vary, but the amounts of the individual food products eaten must not vary:

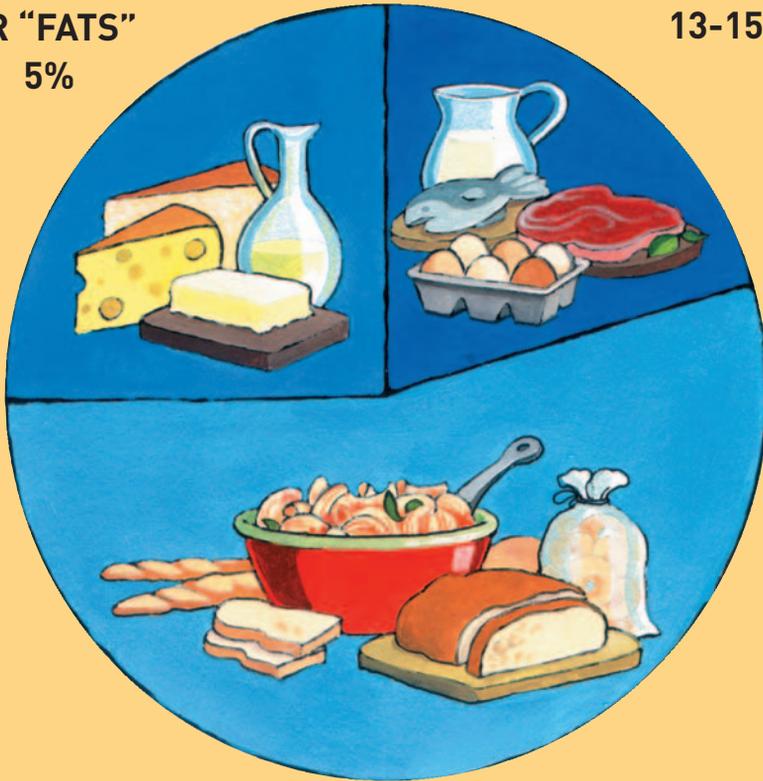
proteins: contained in meats, fish, eggs, milk, etc. must make up 13-15% of the daily intake.

saccharides or carbohydrates: contained in pasta, bread, rusk (crisp bread), should make up about 60% of the daily intake (in calories), of which only a minimum part should consist of the simple sugars contained in cakes and donuts, fruit, biscuits, etc;

Lipids or "fats": contained in oils, butter, meats and cheeses. They should make up 25% of the daily intake; however, vegetable fats (olive oil) should be given preference.

Moreover, meals should be balanced throughout the day: there is a greater need for energy in the morning to start the day. For this reason, breakfast is usually rich in saccharides.

**LIPIDS
OR "FATS"**
5%



PROTEINS
13-15%

**SACCHARIDES OR
CARBOHYDRATES**
60%



In the evening, there is a need to prepare for rest and thus the evening meal should not be a heavy meal. A light meal will prevent reflux phenomena (upflow or regurgitation of food/gastric acids from the stomach to the esophagus), **nausea**, (nausea) or stomach feeling too full.

Elderly persons often have health problems, which can be worsened by an improper diet, even if they do not directly involve the digestive system (vascular conditions, attacks of gout...). For this reason, it is best to decide on the diet best suited to the individual together with the physician, and then look into ways to distribute foods during the day, attempting to find a compromise between health requirements and personal preferences.

Rules for proper nutrition

Nowadays there are a very wide variety of food products that are available all year round, but this does not necessarily mean that these products are “good” for us. When fruit and vegetables mature naturally in open fields, they are richer in **vitamins and minerals** (vitamine e minerali) and they are better for us. If you do not know which products are seasonal, you can ask the person you are assisting (when orientation exists), family members, neighbours, or the salesperson in the shop where you do your shopping.

Customs (abitudini) - **traditions** (tradizioni) – **culture**.

While it is true that in our times many illnesses are the result of improper eating habits, it is also true that we cannot tell someone who has been fortunate enough to grow old that his eating habits have always been completely wrong.

With the onset of illnesses, there may be clinical and care needs also relating to food, but changes must be presented above all with an attempt to make the person being assisted aware of this. In this case, a good relationship with the physician and healthcare services active in your area can also help to respect health requirements and local traditions. For example, zucchini can be grilled and then seasoned instead of frying or sautéing them; a **ragù** sauce (or classic Bolognese meat sauce for pasta) can be prepared without cream and butter, and so



forth. In fact, a proper diet does not mean uninteresting foods and least of all, foods that are **tasteless** (mancanza di sapore). The dishes prepared should be appetising and pleasing so that eating always remains a pleasure for the elderly person and never an imposition in any case. To avoid situations in which the person refuses to eat, it is best to discuss and agree upon the menu according to the elderly person's preferences, habits, traditions and medical conditions within the limits of his options, during the preparation process.

Monitoring medicines and helping the patient with them

Together with the physician or family members, the caregiver can draw up a “**medicine chart**” (pro-memoria) that includes time intervals and amounts for the medicines prescribed. In addition, the caregiver shall check the expiration dates on the packages when they are purchased and when taken by the patient. All medicines shall be kept in a safe place, away from heat and moisture.

Body fluids and waste

Observation and possible indications serving for healthcare, such as vomit, urine, faeces and sputum. Careful observation of these fluids is of vital importance for the elderly person's health, and reporting any changes to the physician is equally important.

DIETETIC MEAT SAUCE

Ingredients:

- *Three hundred grams of ground beef*
- *1/2 onion, 1/2 carrot*
- *1/2 celery stalk*
- *1/2 tablespoon triple tomato concentrate or 150 gr. puréed tomatoes*
- *a tiny amount of extra virgin olive oil*
- *water*
- *salt*

Put two or three tablespoons of oil in a saucepan. Prepare the mixture of onion, carrot and celery chopping so finely that the initial ingredients are unidentifiable. This can be done using a special chopping tool called a mezzaluna (or “half moon”) or a special chopping knife called a “coltella” in Bologna. In any case, every household has one or the other; just ask someone to show you where it is.

Put the chopped vegetables in the pan with the oil over very low heat and cover the pan - the steam produced will cook the chopped vegetables without frying them. However, check every so often to ensure that the vegetables do not stick to the bottom of the pan, using a wooden spatula to stir the mixture.

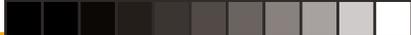
When the vegetables are translucent and start to wilt, add the ground beef and turn up the heat. Remember to stir the mixture with the spatula! As soon as the ground beef changes to a uniform colour, add the tomato concentrate and a cup of water. Turn the heat down low and let the meat sauce simmer for at least three hours, stirring occasionally and adding water if it starts to stick to the bottom of the pan.

If triple tomato concentrate is not available, use puréed tomatoes, but remember to ensure that it does not stick to the bottom of the pan. The end result should be rather dry and the colour not too red, in which the ground meat mixes in with the pasta being served.

Bon appetite!!!

As there is very little oil in this sauce, remember to season the pasta with a tablespoon of olive oil to keep the pasta from sticking together. Otherwise the meat sauce will not coat the pasta.





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