

Poor appetite and food intake in older adults

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Having a poor appetite is a serious health concern for older adults. It can lead to inadequate nutrition, which can shorten your life or reduce your quality of life. Between 11 percent and 15 percent of older adults who live independently are estimated to have poor appetites.

Strategies to improve our appetites as we age include reducing portion size, increasing meal frequency, and using flavor enhancers. Until recently, however, these options have not proven to improve food intake or quality of life for [older people](#). That's part of the reason why a team of researchers designed a study to examine the differences in [food intake](#) among older adults with varied appetite levels. Their study was published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

The researchers looked at data from 2,597 people between the ages of 70 and 79. Nearly 22 percent of the people in the study described their appetite as "poor." The researchers interviewed the participants using a 108-item survey to estimate how much food they ate.

The researchers discovered that older adults with poor appetites ate much less protein and dietary fiber. They also ate fewer solid foods, protein-rich foods, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. However, people with poor appetite did eat/drink more dairy foods, fats, oils, sweets, and sodas compared to older adults who reported having very good appetites.

"The results of this study show several differences in food consumption among older, independent adults with various appetite levels," wrote the researchers in their study. The team concluded that identifying the

specific [food](#) preferences of [older adults](#) with poor appetites could be helpful for learning how to help improve their [appetite](#) and the quality of their diets.

More information: Barbara S. van der Meij et al, Poor Appetite and Dietary Intake in Community-Dwelling Older Adults, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2017). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.15017](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.15017)

Provided by American Geriatrics Society

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