

Fueling Health: Nutrition Basics

For seniors and those with chronic illnesses, nutrition is medicine. Poor diet leads to muscle loss, falls, and slow wound healing.

1. Special Diets to Know

- **Low Sodium (No Salt):** Crucial for Heart Failure or Hypertension. Avoid canned soups and deli meats.
- **Diabetic (Low Sugar/Carb):** Focus on whole grains, lean protein, and fiber. Watch for signs of low blood sugar.
- **Mechanical Soft/Pureed:** For clients with swallowing issues (Dysphagia). Everything must be soft or blended to prevent choking.
- **Thickened Liquids:** Use thickener to reach "Nectar" or "Honey" consistency as ordered by the doctor.

Hydration is Vital: Seniors often lose their sense of thirst. Offer small sips of water throughout the shift, not just at mealtimes.

2. Food Safety & Handling

Bacteria grows rapidly in "The Danger Zone" (between 40°F and 140°F).

Safe Cooking Practices

- **Clean:** Wash hands before and after handling raw meat/eggs. Wash produce thoroughly.
- **Separate:** Never use the same cutting board for raw meat and vegetables.
- **Cook:** Ensure meats reach safe internal temperatures. Reheat leftovers to 165°F.
- **Chill:** Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Label containers with the date they were cooked.

CHOKING HAZARD: If a client is coughing or gasping while eating, stop immediately. If they cannot breathe or speak, perform the Heimlich Maneuver and call 911.

Quiz Prep: A client wants to eat a ham sandwich left on the counter for 4 hours.
Correct Action: Politely explain it isn't safe and offer to make a fresh one. Bacteria can double every 20 minutes at room temperature.