

## **Meal intake**

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### *Abstract*

The mouth is the access to the body, thus age-related physiological changes of the oral passage way in elderly citizens may negatively impact meal intake and nutritional status. Sensory impairment, e.g. decreased sense of taste may result in reduced appetite. The onset of limited motoric hand function can rapidly decrease the capability of oral hygiene and be the initiating cause of development of oral diseases in a person with, until then, excellent oral status. Soreness of the oral mucosa and periodontal tissues, sensitive or aching teeth that are to some extent tolerated to linger, as well as chewing and swallowing impairment can limit diet choices. Such oral problems may lead to avoidance of particular foods and hinder meal intake by avoidance of chewing leading to a monotonous soft diet.

In particular, disadvantaged elderly citizens have an increased risk of oral diseases, and also may be underserved in terms of dental care, which may have significant impact on dental status and thus meal intake.

Consequently, keeping the oral passage way functioning is one parameter in the multidimensional and interprofessional management of preventing undernutrition in elderly citizens.