Some changes with age affect hunger and eating. Some of these changes are normal. Some of these changes are caused by diseases that are common with aging. The table below lists some of these changes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less able to taste and smell</th>
<th>Dry mouth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is hard to chew</td>
<td>It is hard to swallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heartburn</td>
<td>Less thirst</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some changes can be unsafe. If smell and taste are lower, it is hard to tell if food has spoiled. Eating spoiled food makes people sick. It is important to date and label foods, and check dates before eating. Throw out all old foods.

It is also unsafe when it is hard to chew and swallow. Choking is common for older adults. Dentures can make choking more likely. Older adults should take small bites and chew food slowly. If an older adult chokes, call 911. If trained, use the Heimlich maneuver when the choking person cannot speak or cough. Go to a doctor even after the person stops choking to make sure they are not hurt.

Many older adults also do not drink as much water as they need. This is because they do not feel thirsty. If the person drinks too little water they can feel dizzy and fall. It is important for older adults to drink water all day, even if they do not feel thirsty.

Quick Tips
- Be aware that some foods cannot be taken with some medications. Ask the doctor or pharmacist if the person should not eat some foods.
- Drink lots of water. Drink more water on hot days.
- Vitamin pills cannot replace healthy food. Eat lots of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Take small bites and chew well to not choke.
Older adults should eat foods that are healthy, and are low in fat and sugar. An easy tip is to eat foods that have lots of natural color. These foods have more vitamins. For example, an orange yam has more vitamins than a white potato.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Best Choices</th>
<th>Tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fruit   | berries, apples       | fresh, when possible | • Try not to add sugar  
• Eat many types with different colors  
• Fresh is best. Frozen and canned in juice are okay.  
• If it is hard to chew, cook or blend fruits to make them soft. |
| Vegetables | kale, broccoli, carrots, beets | fresh, when possible | • Eat many types with different colors  
• Fresh is best. Frozen and canned are okay.  
• If it is hard to chew, cook or blend vegetables to make them soft. |
| Grains  | rice, oatmeal, pasta, bread | whole grain       | • Try to eat cereals and grains that do not have added sugar.        |
| Dairy   | milk, cheese, yogurt  | fat-free or low-fat | • Try plain yogurt and add fresh fruit. This will have less sugar than flavored yogurt. |
| Protein | beans, nuts, tofu, meat, fish, eggs | lean cuts        | • Eat very little red meat or high fat meat.  
• Try more meals without meat. Use beans, lentils, nuts or tofu instead. |
| Fats    | oils, nuts, avocado   | unsaturated fats   | • Choose plant fats, like olive oil.  
• Eat less animal fats, like butter. |

Vitamins taken as pills, liquids, or gummies do not replace of a healthy diet. But some older adults need more vitamin D and calcium, even with a healthy diet. Ask a doctor if extra vitamin D or calcium is needed.

Useful Websites
Choking, National Safety Council:
http://www.nsc.org/safety_home/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Pages/Choking.aspx


Written By: C. Bree Johnston, MD, MPH, FACP
Care Partner Information ~ Tips for Providing Older Adult Care
Edited by an interprofessional team from the University of Arizona Center on Aging

This project was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number U1QHP28721, Arizona Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.