Mealtime and strength notes for the next appointment

You see the meals no one else sees, and the small changes in how they get around. This guide helps you write down what you notice, in their words where you can, and bring it to their doctor, nurse or dietitian.

Eating and strength rarely change all at once. A usual meal gets smaller. Getting up from a favorite chair takes a little longer. A week or two of short notes turns those small changes into something a clinician can work with.

BEFORE YOU START

- This is a note-taking guide, not a screening test. It does not score, diagnose or recommend treatment. If a screening is needed, a clinician can use a validated tool.
- This guide does not recommend a product.
- If something worries you now, don't wait for the appointment. See "When to call sooner," below.

How to use it

1. **Ask first.** Tell them what you would like to note and why, and ask what they want their clinician to hear. Their preferences lead.
2. **Keep notes for a week or two.** A few words after a meal is enough.
3. **Bring it to the appointment** with their list of medicines, and pick the questions that matter most to you both.

WHEN TO CALL SOONER

- Contact their doctor promptly if they are losing weight without trying, or are having trouble swallowing.
- If they are choking, cannot breathe, or suddenly seem very unwell, call 911.

About them, in their words

Foods and drinks they enjoy

Foods they have gone off, or find hard to manage

Textures they prefer or avoid

Soft, crisp, smooth, chunky, warm, cold

When they are hungriest, and when they are not

Where and with whom they like to eat

Food traditions, faith or cultural practices

Who helps with shopping, cooking and meals

Medicines and supplements they take

Or attach their current list

What they want their clinician to know

Changes you have noticed

Tick what applies and note roughly when it started. The sources in brackets are listed under Sources, below.

- ☐ Losing weight without trying, or clothes, belts or jewelry getting looser (NHS)
  Since _____
- ☐ Feeling full sooner than before (NIA)
  Since _____
- ☐ Trouble chewing, or dentures that no longer fit well (NIA)
  Since _____
- ☐ A dry mouth, or appetite changes after a new medicine (NIA)
  Since _____
- ☐ Finding it harder to get up from a chair, climb stairs or carry a bag of shopping (EWGSOP2)
  Since _____
- ☐ Low mood, or eating less because they feel down (NIA, NHS)
  Since _____
- ☐ Finding shopping or cooking harder, or eating alone more often (NIA)
  Since _____
- ☐ A recent hospital stay, operation or illness
  When _____
- ☐ A smaller appetite, or less interest in food and drink (NHS)
  Since _____
- ☐ Food tasting different, or less appealing (NIA)
  Since _____
- ☐ Food seeming to stick in the throat, or swallowing seeming hard (NIA)
  Since _____
- ☐ Feeling tired all the time or weaker, or slow to recover from illness (NHS)
  Since _____
- ☐ Walking more slowly, or needing help to walk across a room (EWGSOP2)
  Since _____
- ☐ Drinking less than usual (NIA)
  Since _____
- ☐ A fall in the past year (EWGSOP2)
  When _____

Anything else you have noticed

Sources and where to find help

- **NIA:** National Institute on Aging. Overcoming roadblocks to healthy eating. Content reviewed April 7, 2022.
- **NIA:** National Institute on Aging. Healthy meal planning: tips for older adults. Content reviewed November 23, 2021.
- **NHS:** National Health Service, UK. Malnutrition: symptoms. Page last reviewed May 23, 2023.
- **NHS:** National Health Service, UK. Unintentional weight loss. Page last reviewed July 28, 2025.
- MedlinePlus, National Library of Medicine. Nutrition for older adults. Last updated March 13, 2024.
- Eldercare Locator, a public service of the U.S. Administration for Community Living, for local meal programs and other services: eldercare.acl.gov or 1-800-677-1116.
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Find a nutrition expert (registered dietitian nutritionists).
- **EWGSOP2:** Cruz-Jentoft AJ, et al. Sarcopenia: revised European consensus on definition and diagnosis. Age Ageing. 2019;48(1):16-31. doi:10.1093/ageing/afy169

Links checked 2 November 2026.

A week of meals

After each meal, note what was offered, what they chose, and about how much they ate, in plain words such as “all of it,” “about half” or “a few bites.” Add anything that seemed to help: company, a favorite dish, a different time of day. Print another copy for a second week.

MEALTIME LOG

DAY	MORNING	MIDDAY	EVENING	SNACKS AND DRINKS	WHAT HELPED, OR WHAT GOT IN THE WAY
Day 1					
Day 2					
Day 3					
Day 4					
Day 5					
Day 6					
Day 7					

Questions you might ask

Choose the ones that fit. Their own questions come first.

Their questions

- [ ] Is their weight changing? Can it be checked today and tracked between visits?
- [ ] Could their muscle strength be checked, for example with a grip test or a chair-rise test?
- [ ] Has a nutrition screening been done? What did it show?
- [ ] Given their health, how much protein and energy should they aim for? Is there any reason to limit protein, such as kidney disease?
- [ ] Could any of their medicines be affecting appetite, taste or a dry mouth?
- [ ] Would it help to see a registered dietitian, or a physical therapist about staying active safely?
- [ ] Should a dentist check their teeth or how their dentures fit?
- [ ] Should a speech-language pathologist check their swallowing?
- [ ] Are there foods, drinks or supplements to avoid with their conditions or medicines?
- [ ] If a nutrition drink was suggested and isn't being finished, what else could we try?
- [ ] Would extra snacks, or adding more nutrition to foods they already enjoy, suit them?
- [ ] Is there help with meals at home or in the community?
- [ ] What changes should make us call before the next visit?

After the appointment

What was agreed

Who will do what

Next check-in

Their clinician's name and number

Made by CORUS for families who help an older adult with meals. General information, not medical advice, and no substitute for their clinician's assessment. Prelaunch materials, November 2026.

More at takecorus.com/families.