

42. Special nutritional concerns and its importance in the ageing population

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Older persons are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition. The reason is nutritional requirements are not well defined and also since both lean body mass and basal metabolic rate decline with age, an older person's energy requirement per kilogram of body weight is also reduced. Elderly people often have reduced appetite and energy expenditure, which, coupled with a decline in biological and physiological functions such as reduced lean body mass, changes in cytokine and hormonal level, changes in fluid electrolyte regulation, delay gastric emptying and diminish senses of smell and taste. One of the major challenges in the field of health sciences is the increasing number of geriatric population in the society. Furthermore, it is expected that by 2050, 20% of the total geriatric population of the world would be in india. Nutritional deficiencies particularly concerning protein is very common in elderly. Over 60% of elderly people are malnourished, and many causes may be traced for this malnutrition and it is not always easy to differentiate the age-related factors from the pathological. We need to always remember the phrase that "it is of great importance to add life to years and not years to life". This article emphasizes the various aspects of the nutritional considerations in the geriatric population and its importance to health.

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