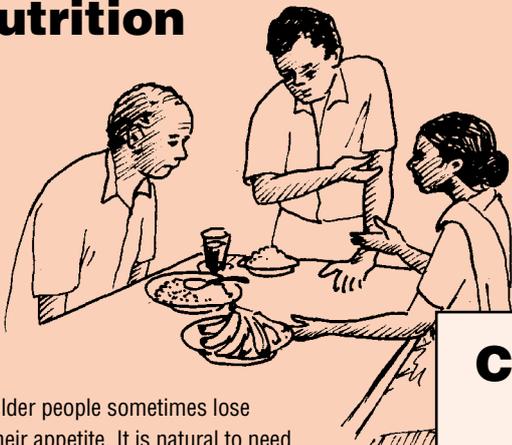


Caring for older people at home

SOME OLDER PEOPLE remain in good health well into their 70s and 80s. Others may find their physical or mental health becomes less good as they grow older. Older people should be included as important members of the family, regardless of their health.



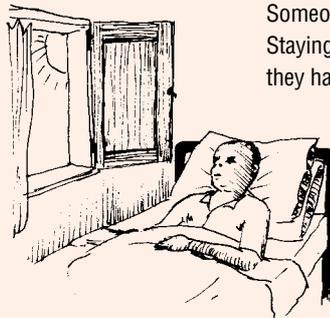
Nutrition



Older people sometimes lose their appetite. It is natural to need less food as the body becomes less active. Provide a balanced nutritious diet to stay healthy. Older people may prefer to eat a small amount several times a day instead of one or two larger meals.

Caring for older relatives is one way to return some of the love family members have received while they were growing up. Most importantly, let older people know they are still loved and respected.

Caring for a bedridden person

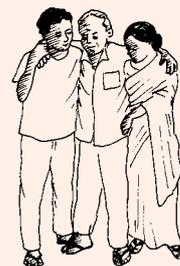


Someone who is too sick to get up will need special attention. Staying in bed for a long time weakens the body. Make sure they have a room with plenty of fresh air and light. Bathe them every day using a basin and cloth. Turn them several times a day to prevent bed sores.



Dirty or wet clothes and sheets irritate the skin and may cause infections. If a bedridden person cannot fully control their bladder or bowel movements:

- Place a piece of plastic covered by a soft cloth around the middle of the bed and change the cloth when wet.
- Always have a bedpan next to the bed and encourage them to use this frequently.
- Tie a towel on, which can be changed when soiled.

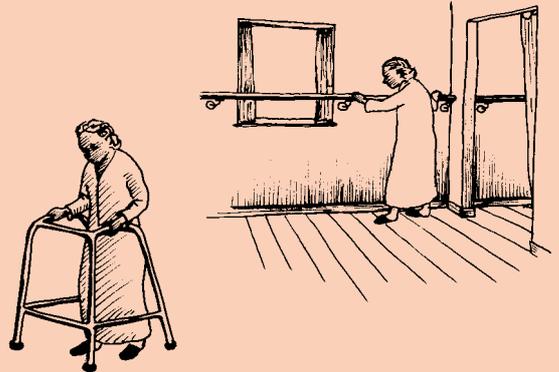


Whenever possible, help them to sit and walk as soon as possible.

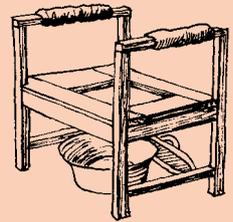
This information was taken from the very helpful booklet produced by staff at Yayasan Kesehatan GNIM, Tomohan, on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia, together with Studio Driya Media and World Neighbours. The booklet is reviewed on page 14.

Preventing accidents

Some people begin to lose their sense of balance as they grow older. They may fall more often and injure themselves. Older bones are more easily broken. Build rails beside steps or along the sides of rooms. Think of ways to help them walk around more easily.



Bars to hold on to in the bathroom can help prevent falls. A pot or bedpan that is close to the bed should be provided for those who have trouble walking or seeing, so that they do not have to go far to use the toilet.



Skin problems



The skin of older people is usually thinner and drier and can become very itchy. Fresh coconut oil or Vaseline can help. Ordinary soap may be too harsh and baby soap could be used instead.

Dying



Some very old people do not want to take medicine or go to hospital when they become ill. They say they are ready to 'go back to God'. This wish should be respected and discussed with the health worker or doctor.

It is never easy to care for a relative who is dying. The family should not be afraid to discuss death in a caring and sensitive way and to give some thought to making arrangements following the death of very ill relatives.

Deafness

When speaking to someone who has trouble hearing, speaking clearly and facing the person will improve communication.

