

“Geriatric Failure to Thrive?”

Some Home Care Solutions

Geriatric failure to thrive is not one particular disease or condition, but a state of decline in overall health that may be caused by chronic concurrent diseases and functional impairments. According to the Institute of Medicine, failure to thrive symptoms include:

- Weight loss of more than 5%
- Poor nutrition or eating habits
- Lack of appetite
- Inertia or lack of exercise or activities

The American Academy of Family Physicians also notes that there are four syndromes that appear to be synonymous with failure to thrive in older adults:

- Impaired physical function
- Malnutrition
- Depression
- Cognitive impairment

HOW HOME CARE CAN HELP

Socialization: Feelings of isolation and loneliness can lead to depression, particularly in older adults who cannot drive. Caregivers can either provide transportation or accompany the senior so that older adults can visit with friends and family and go to church, plays, or other outings. They can also be great companions themselves: playing a game of cards, building a puzzle together or even just sitting and chatting for awhile.

 **CONTINUUM**[®]

HOME CARE

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MORE WAYS HOME CARE CAN HELP

Assistance with meals and diet: Regular, nutritional meals are vital for an older adult who is failing to thrive. Additionally, having someone to enjoy meals with rather than eating alone and creating an atmosphere around mealtimes (with special music, tablecloths, centerpieces, etc.) can help bring joy back to mealtimes and increase appetite.

Grocery shopping/prescription pickup: It can be difficult for older adults to get to the store regularly. Caregivers can shop for healthy food to help maintain optimal health and nutrition, pick up prescriptions and throw out old or expired food and medications.

Exercise/activity: Staying physically active is important for older adults. In-home caregivers can create physician-approved, tailored exercise plans to fit each client’s abilities and particular interests and monitor activity to ensure exercise is done in a safe, controlled environment.

Creative encouragement: Too often, older adults lose interest in hobbies and creative endeavors they once enjoyed. Caregivers can help encourage them to participate in activities they enjoy, such as gardening or fishing, or even help them try new things, such as watercolor painting, clay sculpting, or waltzing. These activities keep older adults mentally, socially, and physically engaged and stimulated.

Preparing a medication schedule: Taking prescribed medication properly—the right amount at the right times—is an important part of helping older adults continue to thrive. Caregivers can not only provide medication reminders to ensure compliance, they can also create a comprehensive document of all medicines the older adult is taking along with possible side effects, prescribing doctor, and any other pertinent medication information.

Scheduling physician follow-up appointments: Caregivers can schedule doctors’ appointments and serve as the client’s advocate during appointments to ask questions and notate answers to ensure better communication and understanding of diagnoses and medications.

Quality home care is more than just meeting older adults’ basic needs, and can really help them live their best lives possible. It may be up to you to take that first step toward encouraging the acceptance of additional help at home.

Give Continuum a call or visit ContinuumCare.com to learn more about how our caregivers can make every day a meaningful day in the celebration of life for older adults.