

CHAPTER 15

NUTRITION DURING ADULTHOOD

REAL LIFE SCENARIO

Frances is a 78-year-old woman who suffers from macular degeneration, osteoporosis, and arthritis. Since her husband died 1 year ago, she has moved from their family house to a small one-bedroom apartment. Her eyesight is progressively getting worse, making it hard to go to the grocery store or even to cook (for fear of burning herself). She is often lonely; her only son lives 1 hour away and works two jobs, but he visits her as often as he can. Frances has lost her appetite and, as a result, often skips meals during the week. She has resorted to eating mostly cold foods, which are simple to prepare, but at the same time is seriously limiting diet variety and palatability in her diet. She is slowly losing weight as a result of her dietary changes and loss of appetite.

Her typical diet usually consists of a breakfast that may include 1 slice of wheat toast with margarine, honey, and cinnamon and 1 cup of hot tea. If she has lunch, she normally has ½ can of peaches, ½ of a turkey and cheese sandwich, and ½ glass of water. For dinner, she might have ½ of a tuna fish sandwich made with mayonnaise and 1 cup of iced tea. Occasionally, she includes one or two cookies at bedtime.

What are the potential consequences of such a poor dietary pattern? What services are available that could help Frances improve her diet and possibly increase her appetite? What other convenience foods could be included in her diet to make it more healthful and more varied?