



Comfort
Keepers.

Stop Senior
HUNGER

A COMFORT KEEPERS® INITIATIVE



THE EFFECTS OF POVERTY AND HUNGER ON SENIORS

Worrying about how to pay for food or obtaining food can take a toll on seniors physically, emotionally and socially.

Feeding America®, the nation's leading domestic hunger-relief charity, provides meals for 25 million people who need food each year. Of those, 3 million are seniors. Nearly 29 percent of households with seniors served by Feeding America® indicated they had to choose between food and medical care, and 31 percent had to choose between food and heat or utilities.

Poverty can lead to hunger, and hunger can impact the physical, emotional and social lives of seniors. Here are some things to watch for:

Physical – Seniors may experience weakness, poor balance, lack of energy and more pronounced symptoms of diseases such as diabetes, dementia, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and vision loss, all due to the lower intakes of nutrients.

A healthy diet can slow the onset of many diseases and help seniors manage the symptoms and impact of disease on lifestyle and longevity, but seniors may experience a loss of appetite from changing senses of taste and smell caused by aging, medication and disease.

Seniors who experience hunger are more likely to experience poor overall health and have more limitations with regard to daily activities.

Emotional – Worry and the physical manifestations of hunger can cause emotional problems for seniors. While it's regularly unrecognized and untreated in older adults, depression affects as many as 6 million Americans over 65.

The following situations can impact the emotional health of seniors: **grief, loneliness, isolation, failing health, retirement, lack of mobility, concurrent illnesses such as Parkinson's disease, cancer or diabetes, medications, and malnutrition** itself, which makes depression worse.

Social – Seniors who are homebound may not only be unable to get the food they need, but their social interaction may be lacking, which can create depression, feelings of isolation and anger.

Visits by *Comfort Keepers*® can provide the food and companionship to help seniors stay healthy and connect them with services to alleviate hunger.

Note: Seniors, their family members and other caregivers should speak with their doctors about managing their nutrition.

