

CULINARY DEPENDENCE AND UNDERNUTRITION IN THE OLDER PEOPLE

Ageing can be accompanied by the onset of disabilities which affect a person's ability to carry out daily tasks particularly those related to food (food shopping or cooking). Cardon and Gojard (2009) put forward the term 'culinary dependence' to refer to situations in which "elderly people are unable to obtain and/or prepare food for their meals and delegate all or part of these tasks to others".

We carried out two surveys to investigate the link between culinary dependence and undernutrition. The first one included older people either living at home without help, with help unrelated to food activities, with help related to food activities, or living in nursing home. The second one included older people with food help from different service providers such as home carers, meal delivery or in a nursing home.

The first survey showed that among people dependent on others for food, about 1 in 2 were at risk of undernutrition or undernourished as compared with only 4% of people living at home independently and 12% of people receiving other forms of help (housework, gardening, personal care). The second survey showed that the prevalence varied slightly according to the type of service involved - 46% for those receiving help from a caregiver, 60% for those receiving home-delivery meals and 69% for those in nursing home.

Without presuming a causal link between dependency and undernutrition, these results show that delegating all or part of culinary activities is associated with a high risk of undernutrition. Consequently, home help care services and care institutions need to develop ways of improving the detection, prevention and management of undernutrition among the people they care for.



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<https://www.inrae.fr/alimentation-sante-globale/alimentation-senior>

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Key words

Aging; older people; undernutrition; dependence; care-giver; nursing home