

TUESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2016

GIVE OLDER AUSTRALIANS A GIFT OF GOOD NUTRITION THIS CHRISTMAS

Australia's peak body for dietitians is urging Australians to enjoy a meal with older relatives, friends and neighbours this festive season, to promote social connectedness and help fend off malnutrition – a sad side-effect of loneliness among older Australians.

According to the Dietitians Association of Australia, 40 per cent of Australians over 65 years are either malnourished or at high risk of malnutrition¹, and this hidden issue is threatening the wellbeing and quality of life of our elderly population.

Being undernourished can lead to a number of serious complications, including an increased risk of osteoporosis, an impaired immune system and poor wound healing².

'One of the major risk factors for under-nutrition in our older generation is social isolation and loneliness. We know from studies that when older people are living alone, their diet often suffers.'

'Elderly people often eat alone, and many lack the ability or motivation to prepare and cook balanced and nutritious meals. Some people call this the 'tea and toast syndrome'. But the good news is that improving people's social ties can lead to greater dietary variety and better health,' said Joel Feren, an Accredited Practising Dietitian and spokesperson for the Dietitians Association of Australia.

He stressed that good nutrition plays a key role in healthy ageing and quality of life.

Julia O'Brien, an 87-year-old woman from rural Victoria, lives alone and finds that Christmas is the one time of the year where she reconnects with her family, including seven children and 15 grandchildren.

'Sharing a meal and spending time with family over Christmas is the best gift you can give to someone. We each bring our favourite dish and enjoy a delicious meal together,' said Mrs O'Brien.

'Christmas can be a particularly lonely time. It's a great opportunity to share a meal with an elderly friend, relative or community member and boost both their physical and mental wellbeing,' said Mr Feren.

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For further information, images or to organise an interview with Joel Feren, contact Felicity Curtain, Dietitians Association of Australia, on 0409 661 920.

Note for journalists: Nutrition Journalism Award

Applications for the Dietitians Association of Australia's 'Nutrition Journalism Award' are open. The Award acknowledges and celebrates quality nutrition reporting by Australian journalists. There are now two categories – short-lead and long-lead. It's incredibly simple to submit an application – visit '[For the Media](#)' on the DAA website for more information.

Recipe: Mediterranean Baked Chicken & Vegies

Try this hearty recipe, courtesy of DAA Corporate Partner [Cobram Estate](#), to share with older friends, relatives and neighbours this festive season.

Ingredients

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| 1 red onion, peeled & cut into fat wedges | 8 spears asparagus |
| 1 red capsicum, cored and cut into 8 pieces | 12 cherry tomatoes |
| 1 large or 2 small zucchini cut into thick slices | Handful fresh flat leaf parsley, roughly chopped |
| 3 cloves garlic, peeled and finely sliced | Handful of fresh basil, leaves picked and roughly torn |
| 1 medium red chilli, sliced | 400g skinless chicken breast, cut into 4 pieces (about 2 large breasts) |
| juice of a lemon | 400g can of borlotti beans, drained and rinsed |
| Freshly ground black pepper | 2 tb extra virgin olive oil |
| 2 cups broccoli florets | grainy rolls, to serve |

Method

Step 1 - In an ovenproof casserole dish put the onion, capsicum and zucchini and mix. Scatter with the garlic slices and the chilli, then lay the chicken pieces on top. Squeeze over the lemon juice, drizzle over the extra virgin olive oil, sprinkle with plenty of freshly ground black pepper.

Step 2 - Cover with foil and bake in the oven for 20 minutes.

Step 3 - Remove from the oven and lift out the chicken breasts. Add the broccoli, asparagus, cherry tomatoes and borlotti beans to the vegies and mix gently. Pop the chicken breasts back on top, replace the foil and bake in the oven for a further 10 minutes.

Step 4 - Remove the foil and scatter with the fresh herbs. Serve immediately with grainy rolls.

References

1. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1747-0080.2011.01572.x/abstract>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3084475/>