

# Cooking Under Pressure



## Executive Summary

Introduction

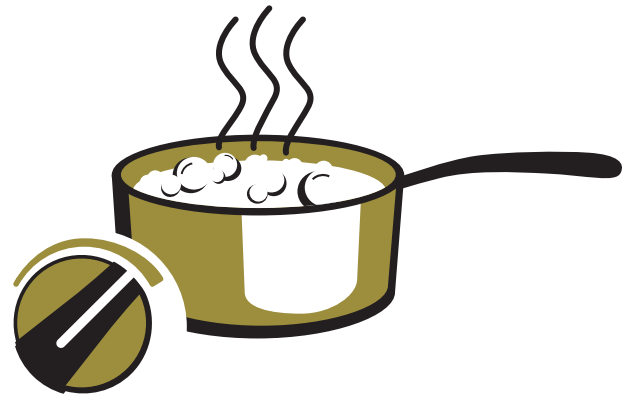
Independent research conducted by the Boomer Project ([www.boomerproject.com](http://www.boomerproject.com)) for the Home Instead Senior Care® network of 407 Canadian adult caregivers revealed that nutrition and related issues had a significant impact on their senior loved ones' health and well-being. Making sure that the older adults for whom they care were eating properly was a high priority for these family caregivers.

The research discovered that family caregivers already spend a significant amount of time caring for their senior loved ones with some of that assistance going toward nutrition-related issues such as grocery shopping and meal preparation.

This survey of adults 35 to 62 years who cared for an older adult found that these seniors face a variety of issues that can impact their ability to achieve a well-balanced diet including use of medications, illness and lack of companionship. Furthermore, the research disclosed that the greater the nutritional risk factors the more stress on the family caregiver.

Nutrition issues impact both the health of seniors and the relationship between adult caregivers and their senior loved ones, as evidenced by this research. The vast majority of caregivers say their seniors have enough food to eat; however, only slightly more than half report their seniors eat a nutritious diet. This would indicate that various factors are influencing a senior's ability to eat nutritiously.

As a result of these survey findings, the Home Instead Senior Care network has launched a public education campaign geared toward providing family caregivers with the tools they need to help their senior loved ones achieve and maintain a well-balanced diet. The campaign features a Web site at [www.foodsforseniors.com](http://www.foodsforseniors.com) and a *Cooking Under Pressure*<sup>SM</sup> handbook, available for download on that site.



## Feeling the Heat

- More than 40 percent of family caregivers spend 20 or more hours a week providing care to their loved one. Some of the most common tasks that caregivers assist their seniors with are grocery shopping/errand running (76 percent of caregivers) and meal preparation (53 percent of caregivers).
- Seventy-eight percent of family caregivers say that making sure their senior eats properly is “very much a priority.” Providing companionship to their loved ones is also a major concern for family caregivers; 78 percent say that making sure their seniors are not lonely is “very much a priority.”
- Caring for an older person who has three or more nutritional risk factors is tied to increased stress levels for caregivers. Of caregivers who rated their lives as extremely stressful, 63 percent were caring for loved ones with three or more nutritional risk factors, compared with 37 percent of caregivers whose seniors have fewer than three nutritional risk factors.



## Seniors at Risk

- Nearly 60 percent of caregivers say the senior they are caring for has three or more nutritional risk factors. The most prevalent risk factors are (percentage refers to number of caregivers who said the condition describes their seniors “very well.”):
  - They take three or more prescribed or over-the-counter drugs per day (71 percent).
  - They have an illness or condition that made them change their diets (43 percent).
  - They have gained or lost more than 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) in the last six months without trying (41 percent).
  - They are on special diets because of a medical condition (36 percent).
- Twenty-eight percent of caregivers say the seniors they are caring for have nutritious food available but the seniors still don’t eat well.
- Nearly half of the caregivers (47 percent) say their senior loved ones rarely cook for themselves.
- Thirty-nine percent of family caregivers report that their seniors typically eat alone.
- One in five family caregivers say the cost of food impacts the ability of their senior to eat a nutritious diet.
- More than half of family caregivers (60 percent) report that the seniors they are caring for rely on assistance to get groceries.

### Survey Methodology

The Boomer Project ([www.boomerproject.com](http://www.boomerproject.com)) completed online interviews with 407 Canadian adult caregivers, ages 35-62, with a parent, stepparent or older relative for whom they or someone in their household provides care. Questions regarding nutritional risk factors and stress adapted from Abbott Laboratories’ “Determine Your Nutritional Health” checklist. Used with the permission of Abbott Laboratories, copyright 2008.



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