

Department of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics

Food and drink in hospital

This leaflet aims to tell you why food and drink are important

Eating and drinking well while you are in hospital plays an important part in your recovery. It can help you get better sooner and get you home quicker. It can also reduce the risk of complications. If you have unintentionally lost weight, you may need help to get your energy back and keep your strength up. These tips may help you re-gain the weight you've lost. Eating well and providing your body with enough nutrition plays an important role in helping you to feel strong and have more energy, cope with treatments and fight infections.

Lack of food (malnutrition) can cause:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• increased risk of illness and infection• slower wound healing• increased risk of falls• difficulty keeping warm | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• low mood• reduced energy levels• reduced muscle strength• weight loss |
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By knowing what the signs are if you do not eat or drink enough, you will be able to identify any concerns and report these to the nursing and medical teams looking after you.

How will my food and fluid needs be assessed?

When you are admitted, nursing staff will carry out an assessment of your nutritional status using a screening tool. This identifies if you are at risk of malnutrition. If required, you may be referred to a specialist team or dietitian. The ward staff should ask you about any special dietary requirements you may have, however please do let them know if you require a special diet or consistency of food or drink.

When will I eat and drink?

There are three meal servings daily, consisting of breakfast, lunch and dinner. Times vary from ward to ward, so speak with staff if you are uncertain.

You will be provided with a jug of fresh water daily at your bedside. If you run out of water at any time, please ask one of the members of staff to top it up.

In addition there are seven hot drink rounds throughout the day, both with meals and between meals. If you are hungry or thirsty at any other time, please inform a member of staff as they can access light snacks such as bread, crackers, cereals, yoghurts, custards, soup and milkshakes at any time of the day from the ward kitchen.

Eat well, get better

You should aim to eat three meals a day and two to three snacks. Once your appetite and weight have improved to an appropriate level you should consider a healthy balanced diet. It's important you enjoy your food.

- If you do not manage all of your meal, additional snacks are available.
- Food can be brought in for you from home/by visitors. Please check with ward staff to ensure its suitability. Please note there are no facilities on the ward to heat food.
- Foods can be fortified on the ward e.g. made richer in calories by using butter and milk.
- Family and visitors are welcome to help you at mealtimes - please check with the nurse in charge.

As a Trust we aim to protect your mealtimes. Protected mealtimes are periods of time over lunch and dinner when all non-urgent clinical activity stops to help ensure you are able to eat in peace.

How do I order my meals?

We use an electronic system to order meals, using the bedside TV. You will be shown how to use this throughout your stay. You can select small, medium or large portions. If you require assistance to use the system please ask.

What if I miss a meal?

Meritene soups and milky drinks, yoghurts, custards, bread, biscuits and cereals are available on the ward if you miss a meal or if you are admitted late e.g. between 8pm and 8am when the kitchens are closed and a hot meal cannot be provided.

What if I have special requirements?

The main menu has vegetarian and soft and bite sized options. We also have special menus available. These include Halal, Kosher, vegan, gluten free, pureed, minced and moist and a finger food menu. Please inform your nurse or the person assisting you with menu choices if you require these.

If you require assistance with eating your meals please select the 'red tray' option on the electronic meal ordering system. Modified eating and drinking aids are available on request.

Our gluten free products include: bread, cereals, cake, biscuits and all hospital made soups. However if you have any other allergies or concerns, ask the nurses/ward staff for help. Where necessary, they can discuss specific requirements with our Catering Department for you.

How do I keep hydrated?

Lack of fluid/drinks (dehydration) can cause:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• weight loss• thirst/ extreme thirst• feeling dizzy/ light headed• increased risk of falls• sleepiness/tiredness• sunken eyes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• dry, sticky mouth and skin• headache• rapid heartbeat• urine infections• kidney damage• passing small amounts of dark, concentrated urine |
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The colour of your urine is a good guide to see how well hydrated you are. A clear, pale yellow colour suggests good hydration whereas a more concentrated, dark yellow colour may indicate you are getting dehydrated. Please check the colour of your urine daily and inform the nursing staff if you are concerned.

Aim to drink 8-10 cups of fluid a day unless instructed otherwise by your doctor. We have modified drinking cups/mugs which you may find more comfortable to use.

Our mission

To provide the excellent care we would expect for our families.

The Royal Bournemouth Hospital, Castle Lane East, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH7 7DW

The Bournemouth Hospital Charity raises funds for the Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals to enhance patient care and purchase items which directly benefit patients and staff above and beyond that which can be funded by the NHS alone. If you would like to contribute to the Bournemouth Hospital Charity please contact them on **01202 704060**, email **charity@rbch.nhs.uk** or visit **www.bournemouthhospitalcharity.org**.

If you have any queries or concerns about your care at the Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) would be happy to help you and can be contacted on **01202 704886/704301** or **pals@rbch.nhs.uk**.

If you would like this leaflet printed in a larger font, please contact the Communications Team on **01202 704905** during the office hours of 8.30am-5pm Monday - Friday.



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