

Supporting good nutritional care for care home residents in their own rooms

Introduction

The following information is intended to offer suggestions which will reduce incidence of malnutrition and dehydration for residents

It is recognised that residents may feel isolated, anxious and stressed. All of these can negatively impact on their appetite.

Staffing levels may be reduced and interaction with outside agencies e.g. pharmacy, GPs and other clinicians need to be limited. Many are already under extreme pressure so the advice below will help to reduce reliance on them.

To maintain good hydration, staff are encouraged to:

Provide fresh jugs of water/squash to all residents

Ensure that residents have thermal cups or adapted cups/beakers to enable them to take drinks themselves at the correct temperature. If people forget to drink and need prompting to take more, it will help staff if flasks/thermal options are used, saving time going back to the kitchen to make fresh drinks each time.

Make up jugs of fortified milk each morning in the fridge (1 pint full fat milk mixed with 4 tbsp skimmed milk powder) for use in all drinks, puddings and cereals. This will help prevent malnutrition and the need for any prescribed products.

Offer a cup or mug of fluid every hour, in addition to when people take medication.

A hot/warm milky drink such as hot chocolate, Ovaltine, Horlicks, Latte may help to relax people especially at bedtime or during the night.

Use food-based sources of fluid e.g. milk puddings, soups (blended may be more palatable for everyone and will save cooks time), ice lollies, ice cream and jellies –vary the flavours.

NB People with dysphagia may aspirate if fluids are given so it is important that advice from speech therapists are followed where appropriate. Do not leave tubs of thickening agent in rooms, if they are required for thickening drinks (on SLT advice only)

To support people to eat well in their own rooms staff should:

Carry out a risk assessment to identify people at risk of choking and ensure all staff are aware of how to support residents and escalate concerns

- Identify residents who will need assistance to eat from staff and plan how this will be safely enabled within staffing levels.
- Use heated plates for people who eat more slowly- to maintain temperature
- Support residents to go to the toilet first.
- Ensure that people sit upright when eating. Anyone who is eating in bed should be propped up but must have their head raised > 30° and keep it raised for 30mins after eating to prevent reflux/aspiration
- Clean residents' hands and tray table and make sure that they can easily reach the plate in front of them plus any cutlery (including adaptive versions) , sauces and other condiments to make the meal tastier for them. Ensure they have sufficient gravy/custard with the meal. If it is too dry they may not manage to eat it. *NB people on texture modified diets must not have extra added by staff*
- Offer a drink with or after the meal
- Record details of anyone not eating or showing signs of a swallowing difficulty (pocketing food, spitting food out, coughing, aspirating etc)
- Call speech therapy office to request advice and/ arrange an assessment via near me/zoom/vc as necessary.
- Use individualised Apetito meals

Snacks

Again make sure peoples' hands are wiped clean before and after eating

Use tea plates or small bowls to provide individual portions of:

- Peeled and chopped fruit or slices of melon, which can be easily eaten with fingers.
- Vegetable sticks e.g. carrot, cucumber, celery, baby tomatoes, peppers (not green)
- Nuts/nuts and raisins (**risk assess**)
- Individual cake slices, muffin, pancake, biscuits etc
- Small pots of smooth flavoured yogurt or fromage frais
- Toast fingers with butter, jam/peanut butter/ honey

Further advice and suggestions can be found in Nutrition News

If specialist dietary advice is needed, please refer to the advice on the care inspectorate food and fluid hub or call your local dietitian (most are working from home) Evelyn Newman is also available on 07870 868475 Follow on twitter @evelynnewman17 or email evelyn,newman@nhs.net.