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This leaflet is available in large print. Arrangements can also be made on request for it to be explained in your preferred language. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) email: pals.office@rjah.nhs.uk

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Information for patients Nutrition and Hydration



Nutrition and Hydration

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Good Nutrition, Good health

When you are in hospital it is common to have a reduced appetite.

Adequate nutrition is very important to help your recovery so staff will encourage you to eat and provide you with additional snacks.

If you are suffering from any symptoms which may be affecting your intake e.g. nausea, vomiting and constipation please highlight this to a nurse or doctor.

If you have a reduced appetite you could try to:

- Adopt a little and often approach by eating smaller amounts but more regularly throughout the day
- Have milky puddings at mealtimes e.g. rice pudding, thick and creamy yoghurts, sponge and custard
- Have nourishing drinks throughout the day, these include: Milk, Build up Milkshakes, Hot Chocolate, Horlicks, Milky tea and coffee
- Have snacks between meals

By being well nourished; this will help with:

- Your recovery from illness or injury
- Wound healing and prevention of pressure sores
- Reducing the risk of developing infections
- Improving muscle and bone strength

Hydration: Frequently asked questions...

What should I drink?

Water, fruit juice and fruit squash are good drinks for hydration. These can be taken as well as tea and coffee. It is better to avoid too many drinks containing large amounts of caffeine as these can make you pass more urine.

When recovering from surgery it might be better to take a mixture of drinks rather than only plain water.

How can I increase the amount I drink?

- Drink a glass of water/squash when you get up
- Drink a glass of water/squash with your meals
- Replace a cup of tea/coffee with a glass of water/squash
- If you are exercising, make sure you have easy access to water
- If your urine appears dark or has a strong odour, this is a sign you need to increase your intake

Will I need to go to the toilet more frequently?

You may do, however this is good, as it is a sign that your body is getting the amount of fluid it requires.

If you are concerned about managing to get to the toilet, please speak to your nurse/carer you can help you with this.

Good Nutrition, Good health

Staying Hydrated, Staying Healthy

Drinking good amounts and ensuring you remain hydrated can contribute towards staying fit and healthy.

Benefits of staying well hydrated:

- Improves concentration, reduces headaches
- Reduces urinary tract infections and kidney stones
- Improves constipation
- Improves low blood pressure
- Reduce pressure sores
- Improves the health of your mouth.

It can be difficult to drink in good amounts. This leaflet is advice to help you keep hydrated. Each individual is different but as a guide you should drink about 2 litres (around 8 large glasses) per day. Your nurse or doctor will advise you of your own requirements.

You may become dehydrated:

- If you do not drink sufficiently
- If you are experiencing diarrhoea or vomiting
- If you have exercised and been sweating
- As a side effect of some medications

Signs of dehydration can include, a dry mouth or lips, thirst, headaches, dizziness, tiredness, confusion, dry, loose skin, dark coloured urine or passing only small amounts of urine.

Hydration: Frequently asked questions...

Monitoring your intake

Use the space below to record your own intake for a day.

After you have completed it, see if there are any opportunities to increase your own nutrition e.g. is there room to fit in an extra snack or nourishing drink?

Breakfast:

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Drinks / Snacks:

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Lunch:

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Drinks / Snacks:

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Evening Meal:

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Drinks / Snacks:

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Anything else consumed:

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Nutrition: Frequently asked questions...

What is the menu system like in hospital?

There are a range of menus available which are suitable for healthy choices and altered textured diets e.g. puree soft options. Menus suitable for a range of special dietary requirements are also available, such as diabetic and gluten free. Please highlight to a member of staff if you require a specific menu.

Are there any snacks available on the ward?

Yes, if you are hungry between meals you can have snacks; these include:

- Biscuits
- Thick & Creamy Yoghurts or Light Yoghurts
- Bread or cereals
- Build-up soup/shake

Can my family bring in food for me and can they come in and assist me with feeding at meal times?

- Due to food safety it is strongly discouraged for family to bring in high risk foods e.g. cooked meats and poultry, eggs, sandwiches, takeaways, cream cakes and meat pies etc
- Due to our Protected Mealtime procedure, visiting during meal times is politely discouraged. Please speak to a member of nursing staff for permission for a family member to be on the ward to assist with feeding

Managing your Nutrition

If you are struggling with eating in hospital:

- Your meal may be placed on a red tray (see explanation, below) if it is thought you may benefit from more assistance with your eating.
- Your weight will be checked weekly
- Your food intake will also be recorded and checked and extra encouragement will be offered

Food served on a red tray

Food served on a red tray provides an effective signal to staff that you need assistance with eating.



Referral to a dietitian

If there are concerns you are not able to meet your nutritional requirements you may be referred to a dietitian who can provide you with individualised advice and support along with written information to help maximise your intake.

*Acknowledgements and thanks to SaTH for allowing us to adapt and use this leaflet.
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