

GUIDELINES FOR FOOD STANDARDS & THE QUALITY OF MEALTIMES

INTRODUCTION

All DRH service users have the right to a balanced and nutritious diet, which is necessary to maintain or improve their health. Mealtimes should be pleasant occasions where service users should be able to enjoy their food in an unhurried and relaxed atmosphere. With the help of staff conversation should be encouraged and the opportunity taken to improve social skills. To assist with this, staff eating alongside service users are able to take their meals free of charge.



Efforts should be made to find out what the service users would like to eat and they should be offered both choice and quality. On occasions the advice of dieticians or nutritionists may need to be sought for special dietary needs.

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS REQUIREMENTS

National minimum standards relate to service users rights to receive a balanced diet in pleasing surroundings at times that are convenient to them. This particular standard includes the following criteria

- ❖ Each service user is offered three full meals each day, at least one of which must be cooked.
- ❖ Hot and cold drinks and snacks should be available at all times and offered regularly.
- ❖ Food is presented in a manner that is attractive and appealing.
- ❖ Special therapeutic diets are provided when advised by health care or dietetic staff.
- ❖ Religious or cultural special needs are catered for.
- ❖ A menu is provided offering a choice of meals
- ❖ Mealtimes are unhurried and relaxed with service users being given plenty of time to eat.
- ❖ Service users are actively supported in helping to plan, prepare and serve meals.
- ❖ Service users can choose where and when to eat meals and whether to eat alone or with others including staff.
- ❖ Service users nutritional needs are assessed and regularly reviewed including risk factors associated with low weight, obesity and eating and drinking disorders.
- ❖ Staff encourage independent eating for as long as possible, but are ready to offer assistance wherever necessary, while maintaining service users choice of when, where and what they eat.
- ❖ It should be remembered that failing to provide sufficient food or assistance with eating and drinking could cause deterioration of the service users health and may constitute neglect.

PROCEDURES

Menus

Menus should be provided in a format that is understandable or readable to all service users (ie.braille or pictorial versions should be available wherever necessary) and should be changed regularly to stimulate appetite and variety. Dull repetitive and unimaginative menus should be avoided.

The planning of the menu should take the following into account

- ❖ Physical requirements such as eating difficulties
- ❖ The time of year (ie summer or winter).
- ❖ Individual likes, dislikes or preferences.
- ❖ Special needs (ie vegetarian diets, obesity diets and diets for specific health related problems such as high blood pressure).
- ❖ The need for a healthy, balanced diet.

The cultural diversity of the facilities' population should also be represented in the choice of menu. Intakes of meat and dairy foods should be moderate, and foods high in sugar and fat should be kept as minor components of the diet. Such a diet, with an appropriate variety of foods is important for good health and reduces the risk of certain diet-related diseases and health problems such as obesity, coronary heart disease, constipation and anaemia. Specialist advice should be sought from a local dietician service or from a local health promotion service, but the following guidance notes may be useful in developing a sound menu for residents.

Starchy foods

Starchy foods such as potatoes, rice, pasta, bread, breakfast cereals and oats should be a major part of most meals, along with fruit and vegetables. They provide energy and fibre and because they are bulky foods, they are filling. Most starchy foods are also rich in B vitamins which are important for helping the body release energy from food.



Fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are high in fibre, low in calories and fat, and are a good source of vitamins and minerals. This makes them essential foods for a healthy diet and national nutritional guidelines state that people should aim to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.



Meat and fish

Animal products are generally rich in protein which is essential for the growth and repair of cells. Meat and fish are also a good source of iron and zinc, important elements in a healthy diet. Iron is used by the body in the formation of red blood cells which transport oxygen around the body. A deficiency of dietary iron can lead to anaemia. However, when preparing a meal, starchy food should form the basis of the meal, along with fruit, salad or vegetables. Protein foods should be eaten in moderation as many also contain high levels of fat. The fat content and proportion of saturated fat to overall fat content of meat and meat products varies depending on the type of animal, the cut of meat and added fat produce lower fat dishes. Aim to



have fish once or twice each week, including oily fish, and use processed meat products, such as sausages and pates as infrequently as possible.

For vegetarians, a diet without any animal protein can meet requirements for most nutrients if the diet is planned carefully. Special care is needed to ensure that sufficient iron, calcium, vitamin D and riboflavin is provided. Anyone who does not eat animal protein will need to include another source of vitamin B12, such as yeast extracts. This vitamin is needed for the formation of blood cells and for the maintenance of a healthy nervous system.

Milk & Dairy Products

Milk and dairy foods are rich in protein and provide over half of the calcium in the typical UK diet. Calcium is important for blood clotting, controlling blood pressure, helping muscles to contract and relax, and for healthy bones and teeth.

Two to three portions of these foods a day should meet normal calcium requirements but lower fat versions of milk and dairy products should be used instead of full fat, wherever possible.



Fatty & sugary foods

This group includes butter and margarine, cooking fats and oils, cakes and biscuits, puddings, ice cream, chocolate and sugary drinks. Fats are actually essential to the body's well being and are necessary for energy and warmth. However, high intakes of the wrong form of fats can lead to weight gain and risk factors associated with coronary heart disease. DRH aim is to keep fatty and sugary foods to a minimum in the menu. When choosing pre-prepared foods, read the labelling to select those with a low fat or low sugar content and use less fat for cooking by adopting alternative methods of cooking, wherever possible, such as grilling, microwaving, steaming or poaching.



Dietary fibre

Insoluble fibre from wholegrain breakfast cereals, wholemeal bread and wholemeal rice and pasta helps to prevent constipation and disorders which can stem from chronic constipation, such as haemorrhoids and diverticular disease. Preventing constipation also means that waste products pass through the body more quickly and this is thought to help protect against bowel cancer. With high levels of fibre in the diet there also needs to be plenty of fluids – at least six to eight drinks (such as water, tea or soft drinks) each day.



Vitamins and minerals

Vitamins and minerals are necessary for the maintenance of skin, bones, teeth, muscles, blood cells, the immune system and eyesight. A wide variety of foods contain them, but overcooking and preparing fruit and vegetables in advance, or leaving them in water, is thought to destroy them. A good quality balanced diet will meet most peoples' nutritional needs and regular use of vitamin supplements is not warranted if a service user is active, gets plenty of sunshine and eats a healthy diet. Taking a vitamin supplement will also not compensate for having a high intake of fatty and sugary foods.



Fluids

Fluids are an essential and often overlooked part of people's diets. The best fluid is plain water although others such as juices, can contain vitamins. Fluids should



be available at all times and should be served at mealtimes and at regular intervals during the day.

Dining Arrangements

Service users who use a communal dining room should be able to eat together at tables laid with appropriate cutlery, and care should be taken to ensure that they are able to sit comfortably. Tables should have sufficient space to allow people not to feel cramped and be at the correct height to allow wheelchair users easy access. Additional chairs should be available for carers to be able to sit whilst offering assistance to those who require it.

It is the responsibility of those serving the meals to report back to the person in charge if a service user does not eat their meal so that a meal replacement may be offered if appropriate.

In some circumstances service users may prefer or require their meals in their rooms and this should be a choice available to them. It is common practice for breakfast to be served in this way and when service users are unwell this may be particularly appropriate.



Eating Difficulties

Service users who are particularly infirm or disabled, or who are suffering from certain conditions, may require some assistance with eating and drinking from time to time, and such aid should be marked on their care plan, e.g. those who have suffered a stroke may suffer with swallowing difficulties and require liquid or pureed diets. Service users with poorly fitting dentures may also experience difficulties with chewing food and softer options may need to be offered until the denture can be altered.

Further guidance should be sought from the GP, District Nurse, Health Visitor or Dietician if a service user's nutritional status is compromised due to illness, or there is an alteration in their condition which causes concern.



Training

Training should be provided for all staff undertaking the role of caterer, not just in the relevant aspects of health and safety and hygiene, but in menu planning and food serving. The Manager should ensure that staff assisting with feeding service users help them in a skilled and sensitive fashion.

Menu Ideas

When planning a menu, the following guidelines should be taken into account:-

- Ensure that each service user consumes at least five portions of red or green fruit and vegetables each day. These may be fresh, canned or frozen, but ensure that they are not served with added fats and preferably not too much sugar. They may also be served as a fruit juice, pureed or in a dessert.
- Ensure that variety of colour, flavours and textures are considered at each meal and that each dish is attractively presented.
- Always offer an alternative choice, eg. Two main course dishes and a choice of pudding, fruit or cheese.
- Wherever possible, all foods should be grilled, roasted on a trivet, poached or boiled. Avoid deep frying and offer roast dishes not more than twice a week.
- It is generally possible to reduce the quantity of fat and sugar in a recipe by up to a third without impairing the taste. If this is not possible, then choose a different menu item.

- Normally the main meal of the day would be at lunchtime.
- If it is necessary to offer mid-afternoon or supper snacks, then ensure that fresh fruit is always available. Bananas can be both satisfying and nutritious. It is inadvisable to encourage dependency on biscuits, or toast and jam, although these obviously play a part in an overall well-balanced diet.
- All fats should be polyunsaturated, and should be used most sparingly.
- Milk is an excellent source of calcium, and its use is to be encouraged.
- Skimmed milk can be used for cooking and semi-skimmed milk for tea, coffee and breakfast cereals, etc. where taste is important.
- Consumption of wholewheat products such as bread and breakfast cereals should be strongly encouraged.
- The purchase of fatty cuts of meat is to be avoided on the ground of both false economy and poor nutritional value. Good quality mince can be supplemented with soya mince rather than using poor quality economy mince, catering quality sausages should be discarded in favour of more expensive quality sausages which should be grilled or baked in the oven.
- Service users should be offered at least two portions of oily fish per week. This includes sardines, pilchards, trout, herring, mackerel and salmon. In the case of trout and salmon, modern methods of farming, together with special offers have made them a very reasonable alternative to meat.
- Do not forget those from ethnic minority backgrounds in your care. They should certainly have the opportunity to eat dishes to which they are accustomed on a regular basis and if the cooks develop skills to produce authentic dishes then it will add variety and interest to the menus for all service users. These dishes can then be offered as one of the choices of main meal, ensuring that a more traditional dish is available for those who prefer. It also makes for psychological stimulation in the home.
- Recipes for non-English dishes may need to be modified to comply with current dietary guidelines, but are easily obtainable from books or even the family of the service user. There are a plethora of books on foods from other parts of the world. For those who need authentic West Indian or Indian recipes the following books can be recommended:

Traditional Jamaican Cookery, Norma Benghiat, Penquin 1995 ISBN 01 40465987
 A Taste of India, Madhur Jaffrey, Pavilion Books 1989. OSNN 18 51451986
 Madhur Jaffrey's Indian Cookery, BBC, 1982 ISBN 05 63164913.

- Reduce the quantity of salt that is used in cooking, and at the table, but in particular reduce the quantity of convenience foods that are used, as these provide up to 75% of the individual's salt intake. Packet soup and sauces are particular offenders.

Breakfast

Breakfast will tend to be very similar every day, except perhaps for weekends when a traditional breakfast may be preferred. It is recommended that the following should be offered on a daily basis, and that as far as possible at least one portion of a wholemeal item together with a fruit juice or piece of fresh fruit and some milk is consumed by all residents. To avoid the menu becoming boring and predictable it may be worth considering offering a variety of warm bread rolls and always having fresh fruit available.

- **Fresh fruit juice** – choice from apple, orange, grapefruit, pineapple, etc.

- ❑ **Cereal** – offer a selection of fortified breakfast cereals and wholewheat
- ❑ **Toast** – offer both wholemeal and white
- ❑ **Milk** – should be semi-skimmed
- ❑ **Spreads** – offer a polyunsaturated margarine in preference to butter, marmalade and preserves
- ❑ **Cooked breakfast** – Boiled, poached or scrambled eggs, grilled tomatoes
- ❑ **Traditional breakfast** – A combination of grilled bacon, tomatoes, poached eggs and baked beans could be offered at weekends.

Lunches

The following are ideas for lunches:

- Roast chicken or turkey
- Chicken or turkey à la king with rice
- Chicken or turkey casserole
- Chicken or turkey and mushroom vol-au-vents
- Chicken or turkey in cream and mushroom sauce
- Chicken or turkey and mushroom pie
- Roast beef and Yorkshire pudding
- Boiled silverside of beef, with carrots and dumplings
- Braised steak
- Beef goulash
- Cottage pie
- Lassagne with a side salad
- Roast Pork and apple sauce
- Sweet and sour pork
- Pork chops
- Barbecued pork
- Roast Lamb
- Moussaka with a side salad
- Shepherds pie
- Braised lamb hearts
- Poached salmon (hot or cold)
- Grilled or baked trout
- Plaice poached in a white wine and tomato sauce
- Baked fishcakes with fresh tomato or parsley sauce
- Fish pie (with mashed or duchesse potatoes)
- Smoked haddock.

Evening meals

The following are ideas for evening meals:

- Cheese and onion quiche
- Risotto
- Pasta with either bolognaise sauce, tomato sauce, tuna sauce or mushroom sauce
- Macaroni cheese
- Ravioli
- Salade nicoise – a mixed salad to include any or all of the following:
Tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, French beans, anchovies, flaked tuna (in brine), olives, capers, quartered hard boiled eggs, dressed in French dressing made with olive oil

- Baked jacket potatoes with no butter – fillings including tuna and corn, chicken and mushroom, chilli beans, chilli con carne, curried lamb, etc served with an interesting salad.
- Omelettes

Vegetarian dishes

The following are ideas for vegetarian meals:

- Macaroni cheese
- Cauliflower cheese
- Shepherds pie (with soya mince instead of mince meat)
- Vegetable curry

Vegan dishes

The following are ideas for vegan dishes:

- Mediterranean vegetables
- Tofu stir-fry
- Vegetable chilli con carne
- Couscous with tomatoes and herbs

Desserts

The following are ideas for desserts:

- Fruit fools/pies/tarts/flans/strudels/mousses
- Milk puddings – rice pudding, baked egg custards, bread and butter pudding or semolina
- Ice Creams
- Custard
- Yoghurts

RECORDS

Menu Plan

This form can be used as a weekly Menu Plan and can be used in conjunction with:

Daily Choice of Menu

Which can be used for the service users daily choices.



MENU PLAN

WEEK COMMENCING:.....

Each day should offer a choice of at least two main dishes and desserts

DAY	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			

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