



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Eating Well in Hospital

What you should expect



Eating well and enjoying your food is an important part of your care whilst you are in hospital.

The Catering service will provide meals that are healthy, wholesome and appetising for every patient. This includes providing meals that meet your lifestyle choice, ethnic and religious needs. If you have special dietary needs, including food allergies, talk to the ward staff or your dietician about this. You should be asked to choose your meals each day and sometimes, because of your condition, you may need a special or restricted diet.

Within 24 hours of arriving on the ward, nursing staff should do some simple checks to see if you have any special dietary needs or problems. This should include measurement of your weight and height and questions about how you have been eating, and whether you have recently lost weight unintentionally. If these checks identify that you have special dietary needs or problems the nursing staff should create a 'care plan' that sets out how they will meet those needs. Nursing

staff may also refer you to a dietician who can provide specialist advice on how your diet should be managed whilst you are in hospital.

If you need special help, the ward you are on will have a way of ensuring nurses and catering staff know this. Some hospitals use red food trays to do this. Others may use a red napkin, or put a special sign above or beside your bed.

It is important that you drink properly and fresh water should always be available while hot drinks, like tea and coffee, should be served at different times throughout the day. You should be served with at least seven of these during the day.

Before your meal arrives, ward staff should tidy up the ward and, if necessary, help you sit up and get comfortable. You should also be given the opportunity to clean your hands before you eat.

It is important that your meal should be free of unnecessary interruptions and hospitals should ensure that doctors' ward rounds and other activities do not interfere with mealtimes. This is called the protected mealtime. This also means that your visitors may be asked to leave the ward at mealtimes, unless they are there to help you eat your meal.

Sometimes because you have special tests done, you may miss your meal. If this happens, ward staff should be able to provide you with another meal. If you are hungry between meals, snacks are available. Ask the ward staff if you want a snack.

If nursing staff or dieticians identify that you have dietary problems, they will keep a check on what you eat and drink during your hospital stay, recording it on a special chart.

If you have any worries about how your dietary needs are being met during your stay in hospital, please let the nursing staff know as soon as possible. If you want to talk to someone from the catering service about the food you are receiving, the ward staff can arrange this for you.



Find out more

For more information on the Auditor General for Wales' work on hospital catering and patient nutrition, please visit www.wao.gov.uk



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