

Service:  
**Nutrition and Dietetics**

# The importance of eating well in hospital



# Why have I been given this leaflet?

**Every person admitted to hospital is screened for malnutrition risk.**

**You have been highlighted as being at risk of malnutrition.**

## What is malnutrition?

Malnutrition is when your body does not get all the nutrients (e.g. energy or protein) it needs to function properly.

### Malnutrition can occur if:

- You have a low body weight.
- You have recently lost weight.
- You have a reduced appetite.
- You have increased need for nutrition due to illness or surgery.

### Malnutrition increases risk of complications such as:

- Infection.
- Falls.
- Pressure ulcers.
- Tiredness
- Heart and breathing problems.
- Increased length of stay in hospital.

## Why is it important to eat well in hospital?

Eating well in hospital will reduce risk of malnutrition and the associated complications.

### Improving your food intake will help you to:

- Fight infection.
- Heal wounds and broken bones.
- Do more for yourself and make you feel brighter.
- Give you more strength to move around and breathe better.
- Stay in hospital for less time.

## How to improve your food intake

If you find you can't eat very much at meal times try eating smaller portions but more often.

- Ask for a milky drink such as a glass of hot or cold milk, Horlicks, Ovaltine or drinking chocolate between meals instead of tea or coffee.
- You will be offered a special high energy milk shakes such as Meritene shake or Fortisip Compact protein.
- Have a biscuit or piece of cake with your drink between meals.
- Ask the nurse looking after you for a slice of toast or bowl of breakfast cereal at bedtime. These foods are always available in the ward kitchen.
- Ask your friends and relatives to bring in cartons or fruit juice (such as orange juice or cranberry juice), smoothies or non diet fizzy drinks. Have them between meals rather than drinking squash.



- Desserts: The best choice is a small helping of sponge and custard, crumble and custard, milky pudding, bread and butter pudding or cheese and crackers.

## What could my friends and relatives bring in?

Visitors may like to bring in food or drinks to help you get better.

We have to be careful that foods brought in won't make you ill. For that reason, only foods that can be kept safely in your bedside locker may be brought in. Sandwiches and fresh cakes need to be eaten immediately. They cannot be 'kept for later'.



## Here are some ideas for foods you can bring in:

- Biscuits, breakfast and cereal bars.
- Small boxes of breakfast cereals.
- Cake portions, muffins, flapjack, shortbread.
- Individual pots of long-life rice pudding, crème desserts or custard.
- Long-life yoghurts or milk shakes.
- Small cartons of fruit juice.
- Sachets of Build-up soup or milkshakes.
- Sachets of Complan soups or milkshakes.

## Suggested meal plan

**Breakfast:** Porridge or cereal with milk and sugar.

Carton of fruit juice.

**Mid-morning:** Cup of hot or cold milk and a biscuit.

**Mid-day meal:** Main course followed by dessert.

**Mid-afternoon:** Milky drink or fruit juice and biscuits or portion of cake.

**Evening meal:** Build-up soup, sandwich or portion of hot meal. Portion of milk pudding, yoghurt or blancmange.

**During evening:** Milk-based drink such as drinking chocolate or Horlicks. Portion of cheese and biscuits, a slice of toast or a small bowl of breakfast cereal.



## Other tips

- Ward staff are busy but they want to help you get better. Don't be afraid to ask if any milky drinks or snacks are available. Milk, bread and breakfast cereals are usually available in the ward kitchens.
- It is important for you to be as well-nourished as possible because it helps you get better.



NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities: [www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution](http://www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution)

**Use this space to write down any questions you may have**

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**How to contact us:**



[www.nbt.nhs.uk/nutrition-dietetics](http://www.nbt.nhs.uk/nutrition-dietetics)

If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.

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