Eating well whilst in hospital

Nutrition & Dietetics
Who is this leaflet for?

The information in this leaflet will help to ensure you eat well during your hospital stay. This information is useful for you and your relatives/carers if you are currently in hospital and you have:

■ a poor appetite
■ lost weight without meaning to
■ lost interest in food
■ been missing meals

Why is it important for me to eat well?

Eating and drinking as well as possible during your hospital stay is important as it will help to:

■ fight infection
■ promote healing
■ maintain weight
■ maintain muscle mass for mobility

You will feel better and may be able to return home quicker if you eat well.

What should I eat whilst in hospital?

■ If you have a poor appetite then try to eat little and often.
■ Healthy eating advice you may have been given in the past is not appropriate at this time. It is important to choose meals and snacks which are high in energy and protein.

Hints and tips for filling in your menu

■ Make sure you order something to eat at each meal.
■ You can choose a hot meal at both lunch and supper.
■ Select the sweet and/or savoury snack option on the menu.
■ Select extras from the menu of preferred foods for example, extra puddings
■ A blank box on the menu will be available to write any personal preferences/dietary information
Use codes on the menu to make suitable choices; e.g. S = Soft, V = Vegetarian, GF= Gluten Free, NGCI = No Gluten Containing Ingredients, ☸ = healthy option

Our menus are allergy coded so please ask a member of staff if you are allergic to specific ingredients

Sweet / savoury snack options

If you select the sweet or savoury snack option on the menu then the following may be provided.

Sweet snacks:
- A pack of biscuits e.g. custard creams, digestives, bourbon creams
- A small cake

Savoury snacks:
- Crisps
- Cheese biscuits e.g. mini cheddars
- Cheese and crackers

Additional snacks

Your menu may be labelled with High Protein by your nurse, doctor or Dietitian. This means you can order the following items as extras:

- Yoghurts including: Muller thick and creamy
- Mini rice pudding pot
- Pint of milk; full cream, semi-skimmed or skimmed
- Cheese and crackers (with butter or spread)
- Sandwiches
- Extra portions of butter, spread, jam and marmalade
- Extra condiments e.g. salad cream, vinegar, salt and pepper

Please write your choices in the blank box provided on your menu.
Ideas for menu selections

Breakfast
Bowl of cereal or porridge with:
- sugar or jam
- full cream milk
And / or bread / croissants with:
- thickly spread butter or spread and marmalade or jam
And select sweet / savoury snack option for mid-morning

Your main meal (ideally at both lunch and supper)
Meat / fish / vegetarian option
And potatoes or rice
And vegetables
And one or two desserts e.g. sponge pudding with custard and ice cream
If you are unable to have a main meal at both lunch / supper, choose a light meal instead:

Your light meal:
Soup with a bread roll and butter / spread
And sandwiches or salad
And one or two desserts

What should I drink whilst in hospital?
To prevent dehydration you should try to have at least 8-10 cups / 6-8 mugs of fluid per day. Have a drink every time you are offered one. Try not to drink at mealtimes, as you may find this fills you up.

A variety of drinks are available from the beverage trolley including tea, coffee, hot chocolate, malted drink, beefy drink and cold milk. Try to choose nourishing drinks throughout the day such as:
cold milk from the drinks trolley
hot drinks e.g. hot chocolate and malted drinks from the drinks trolley
fruit juices from the menu

What can your relatives, friends and carers do to help?

Speak to a member of nursing staff if you feel your relatives / friend's assistance at mealtimes will encourage you with eating. Suitable arrangements can be made for them to come in and help you.

Relatives can bring in suitable favourite foods to snack on in between meals. Acceptable foods to bring into hospital are:
- fresh fruit; washed
- commercial chocolates and confectionery
- biscuits
- pre-packed commercial sandwiches (which do not contain fillings from the list overleaf)
- canned and small bottled soft drinks
- tinned food products which do not require heating e.g. rice pudding, custard
- pre-packaged cake, not containing fresh cream e.g. cake bars / cereal bars
- individual packets of crisps and popcorn

What foods are not suitable to bring into hospital?

Some foods can increase your risk of developing an infection and are not recommended. The following foods should not be brought into hospital:
- raw / undercooked animal foods e.g. pate, eggs, unpasteurised dairy products e.g. milk, cheese, cream or yoghurt
- raw, undercooked or inappropriately thawed meat
- raw fish and shellfish e.g. sushi and sashimi
- food products with a high meat, fish or dairy content e.g. any fresh cream product / cake, flans / quiches or sandwiches with these items as fillings
- any takeaway foods e.g. burgers / pizza and products from any takeaway outlet
- foods which are stale / past their sell by / use by date.

What does the hospital do to help?

Special meals and menus
- The catering department makes every effort to ensure you receive nutritious and appetising food, which caters for health and cultural needs.
- Special menus are available:
  - Purée
  - Allergy (including gluten free, wheat free, nut free, dairy free, egg free, soya free). Gluten free options are also available on the standard hospital menu.
  - Around the world (including Asian, Halal, Caribbean and Kosher meals).

Please inform a member of ward staff if you require one of the above menus.

Coloured trays
- We have a red tray and red water jug system. This ensures all ward staff are aware of the patients who require extra help and support with feeding.

Protected Mealtimes
- Protected mealtimes are a period of time over lunch and supper when all non-urgent ward activities stop. Having fewer distractions on the ward at mealtimes has been shown to improve patient’s nutritional intake. Staff will be available to give assistance to you if need it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protected Mealtime</th>
<th>Wards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.00 – 13.00</td>
<td>Bramshott, Ewhurst, Clandon, ADU, Eashing, Hindhead, Millbridge, Tilford, Hascombe, Wisley, ICU</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.30 – 13.30</td>
<td>Compton, Albury, EAU</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.00 – 14.00</td>
<td>MAU, SAU, Frensham, Elstead, Merrow, Onslow, Shere, St Catherines</td>
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**Snack bags/hot snack option**

- If you have missed a meal or are hungry at bedtime, a cold snack bag or hot snack is available. Please ask a member of ward staff.

- Each cold snack bag contains a sandwich, crisps and 2 of the following; yoghurt, jelly, mousse, cake bar or banana.
  - The cold snack bag is available from 10am-11.30am, 2pm-4.30pm, 6.30pm-8pm.

- A hot snack box includes a jacket potato with baked beans/cheddar cheese served with a juice and jelly.
  - The hot snack box is available from 12 noon and 730pm

**Reference source**


Please find all relevant contact details on the back of the menus.

This leaflet is produced by the dietetic department at The Royal Surrey County Hospital, NHS Foundation Trust. It is not a substitute for dietary advice given to a specific individual by a Dietitian. If you need to see a Dietitian, ask your GP or consultant for a referral.

The information in this leaflet was correct at time of writing. Please note that product changes are not the responsibility of the author.
Contact details

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please contact the dietetic department at the address below:

**Department of Nutrition and Dietetics**
The Royal Surrey County Hospital, Egerton Road, Guildford GU2 7XX
Tel: 01483 464119

Royal Surrey County Hospital (RSCH) NHS Foundation Trust fully subscribes to the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) *Being Open* best practice framework, November 2010.

**PALS and Advocacy contact details**

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located in far left corner as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757
**Email:** rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net
**Opening hours:** 9.00am–4.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.