

Eating well at home

Guidance for people living with dementia and those who support them



We are all currently being asked to change the way we live our lives so that those who are at most risk of coronavirus are kept as safe as possible. For people with dementia and their families and carers, this period of change can be unsettling. Not being able to go about your daily routine or undertake the activities you normally do can be quite stressful at times and you might be feeling more anxious than usual or a bit out of sorts.

In collaboration with allied health professionals, we are preparing a range of information to support you through this uncertain time. This information sheet has been written in partnership with dietitians and provides practical advice to help you to make food and drink choices that work best for you. If you need more information please call our 24 hour Freephone Dementia Helpline on 0808 808 3000 and we will do our very best to help you.

Eating and drinking well can help your body to fight infection and illness and boosts your overall wellbeing. This will enable you to maintain healthy muscles and bones, helping you to stay mobile, whilst reducing your risk of falls and fractures. During this time when our normal activities may be restricted, we might not have the same access to our usual shops or places to eat out. The following suggestions are some things we can do at home to continue to have the nutrition we need and keep well hydrated.

Helpful Tips to Eating Well:



Making meal-times interesting

Make meals more appetising and eye-catching by including different colours and textures. Using finger foods that are easy to pick up without using cutlery can sometimes be helpful. Try using a bright, solid coloured plate to highlight the food on it. Avoid overloading the plate with food and have a small gap between the main meal and dessert. Alternatively offer smaller meals or snacks, more frequently throughout the day.



Sense of taste

You may have found your sense of taste has changed. Foods may taste bland or unusual. Adding stronger flavoured foods such as mature cheese, herbs, spices, citrus fruits, sauces or chutneys can help improve the taste of food and make it easier to include more variety. Some people develop a preference for sweet foods. Naturally sweet foods such as peppers, carrot, sweetcorn, squash or parsnips can make normally savoury dishes taste sweet. Milk based desserts also provide a range of nutrients including energy, protein and calcium. Adding some dried, tinned or fresh fruit for extra sweetness helps to add extra vitamins, minerals and fibre.



Eating well to support a routine

Having regular meals can help you to maintain a routine. The use of technology can be used as a prompt – setting an alarm on a mobile phone or smart speaker can be useful. Written prompts or even a telephone call also be used. Everyone is different and you may have more of an appetite at certain times of the day – this is absolutely normal, so just go with it!



Getting support

If you normally receive support to make your meals from family or carers and this isn't possible just now, consider using companies who deliver ready to heat meals. In addition to meal delivery companies, local businesses such as butchers, restaurants and cafés sometimes offer this service, so check what is available in your local area.



Helpful Tips to Staying Hydrated

Dementia can reduce your response to triggers that you are thirsty. If you don't drink enough fluids this may cause increased confusion, headaches, fatigue, urinary tract infections and dizziness.

Try leaving out a fresh jug of water or squash. Setting reminders or using brightly coloured cups or sports bottles can help draw your attention to drinks. A warm milky drink such as hot chocolate or a malted drink such as Ovaltine or Horlicks may help you to relax especially at bedtime. If using a flask for hot drinks make sure the lid is secured but not tight enough that it cannot be opened. Use foods which are higher in fluid such as milk puddings, soups, jelly, ice lollies, ice cream, smoothies or fruits such as melon or vegetables such as cucumber.



Remember that health services are still available to help you if you need them. If you are worried that you or someone you care for has lost a lot of weight without trying in the past 3-6 months or have been eating little for more than a week, contact your GP. If needed they can arrange for a referral to a local Dietitian for advice and support.

Helpful links

A website with resources on dining, eating and drinking

www.connectingpeopleconnectingsupport.online

Eating well with Dementia – A Carers Guide (NDR-UK leaflet)

<https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00449379.pdf>

Carers UK – leaflet for carers on nutrition and dementia

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/nutrition/dementia-and-nutrition>

British Dietetic Association (BDA) – Q&A advice on Covid-19 and nutrition

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/covid-19-corona-virus-advice-for-the-general-public.html>

24 HOUR

Dementia



Helpline

Freephone 0808 808 3000
Email helpline@alzscot.org