

How can your visitors help?

We encourage person-centred care and know that all patients' value and benefit from spending time and getting support from their family and friends while they are in hospital. However some people can become embarrassed if they need assistance or have difficulty with eating and drinking. **We therefore politely ask that where possible you ask your visitors to follow the ward guidance during mealtimes** to give others some privacy, and allow staff time to assist those who need it. **We do however encourage relatives who may help you at home with eating and drinking to stay and offer you this assistance in hospital.**

Bringing in food

For food safety reasons we would prefer if no food is brought onto the ward for you to eat. However if you, or any visitors do bring food in please ensure that it can be either safely stored at room temperature or is eaten straight away, and does not need to be reheated before serving as we are not allowed to reheat or store foods in the fridge for you. Acceptable examples include:

- Pre-wrapped biscuits
- Fresh fruit and dried fruit
- Sweets and chocolates
- Crisps, nuts and crackers
- Cereal bars
- individual pre-packed cakes, for example muffins (no cream)

The following **must not be brought into hospital** by you or your visitors as they can be a serious health risk to you and others:

- Cooked meats and meat products
- Fish paste and fish products
- Fresh or synthetic cream or cream products
- Uncooked eggs
- Take-away meals
- Yoghurts/dairy products (unless UHT)
- Food containing nuts, especially peanuts

Between meal snacks are available at least twice per day to all patients to help aid their recovery and provide additional food choices. ***Please ask a member of staff how you order snacks.***

What do you think?

NHS Lothian is committed to a high standard of catering for all our patients.

Our Catering department regularly ask ward staff to provide feedback on the meals they have served, they also want to know what you think, if something has gone wrong it helps if they know as soon as possible, in order to put it right.

Likewise, positive feedback is welcome as it assists us in identifying good practice.

Please put your comments on the space on the back of your menus where these are in use, or ask a member of nursing staff to feed back to the catering department.

Eating well at home

If you have been identified as being at risk of under nutrition during your stay it is important that you eat well when you go home. Nursing staff should give you some advice, but you can also find more information at:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/MalnutritionFactSheet.pdf>

Recovering from illness of any sort means that eating well is important. You can get more information on eating healthily at:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/HealthyEating.pdf>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/food-and-nutrition/eating-well/health-benefits-of-eating-well>

Information for patients

Your food and drink in hospital

Your food choices

Our menus have been developed to appeal to a range of tastes and are nutritionally balanced.

Meals are made fresh in our kitchens every day by trained chefs before being transported to your ward. Our Catering departments strive to ensure safe temperatures whilst maintaining quality.

We encourage good nutrition by using a "food first" approach which means we try to offer food as part of your treatment. To support this, you will be asked to choose the meals you want from either individual menu cards or directly from the trolley. In either case you will be able to choose from a range of options and different portion sizes to cater for different tastes and appetites.

To widen the choice available to you at ward level you can also have snacks twice per day.

Please ask ward staff about how to make your choices.

Cultural or religious needs

We are happy to provide meals suited to your religion or cultural needs. If menu choices do not meet your needs, please speak to a member of staff to ensure you receive a suitable alternative.



Your food matters to us

Food and drink is vital to your care and recovery and a key component of quality hospital care.

Why is it so important to eat well?

We all have different requirements from our food and some of us need to restrict certain items. We all need as many nutrients as possible to ensure we improve our health and stay well.

The best way to get lots of nutrients is to have a varied diet. This will naturally have the nutrients, vitamins and minerals you need.

We recognise that being in hospital may mean that you find it more difficult to eat well. **To ensure that you remain as healthy as possible ward staff will regularly weigh you and carry out nutritional screening using the Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool (MUST).** This will also help staff to create an individualised nutritional care plan to assist in meeting your needs.

Good fluid intake is also very important to help you stay healthy. **You should try to drink 8 cups of fluid per day.** There are lots of opportunities to drink well on the ward with tea/coffee rounds and in addition fresh water is available throughout the day.



Are there any foods you cannot eat?

Please tell us if there are any foods you cannot eat because:

- You are allergic to them, as of December 2014 the European Union Food Information for Consumers Regulation came into force. This means hospitals must be able to advise you if the food provided has any of the 14 allergens. When you come into hospital Nursing staff will ask if you have any allergies to food. If so, this needs to be written in your care plan, and also on your menus to alert the Catering Department so that they can provide suitable food.

If you require information regarding the allergen content of meals then please notify the nurse who will contact the Catering Department. Please also write your food allergy on the top of your menu.

Please also write on your menu, and ask nursing staff to alert the Catering Department if you avoid foods because:

- Your doctor or pharmacist has told you to avoid them, perhaps because they should not be mixed with a medicine you are taking
- For religious, cultural or any other reason

In order to meet your dietary needs, **we have codes on the menu to help you make choices about foods suitable for some of the most common diets** such as; Vegetarian, Gluten free or healthy eating. By choosing these options you will receive a meal suitable for your needs.

Please let a member of ward staff know your dietary requirement, and also write this on the top of your menu so that both ward staff and Catering can help you to receive a meal that is suitable for you.

If you require a diet that is not on the menu please let ward staff know as soon as possible so that they can contact the catering department to arrange a suitable alternative. We will work with you to ensure you get the food that you need. In certain cases we may contact a local dietitian for additional advice and support, in line with local referral guidelines.

Eating together

Some of our wards have communal areas for meals. Where these areas exist **we encourage you to eat in there and are happy to help you move to them, if you find this difficult.**

Eating in a communal area gives you a chance to meet others and move around, improving your dining experience during your stay, as well as helping with your recovery.

Whether or not communal areas exist, **wards should be prepared for mealtimes by:**

- Cleaning and preparing bed tables and eating areas.
- Providing drinks and/or refilling water jugs.
- Offering you access to toilet facilities.
- Offering you the opportunity to wash your hands or providing you with hand wipes.
- Making sure assistance is available if you need help with eating and drinking.

Your mealtimes

Meals are served between the following times:

Breakfast	7.30am – 8.45am
Lunch	12 noon – 1.20pm
Dinner	5pm – 6.15pm

Drinks such as tea, coffee, and milk will be offered regularly throughout the day and are also available on request. **Fresh water is always available, please don't hesitate to ask for it.**

If you miss a meal

If you are away from the ward because of a test or treatment, for example physiotherapy and you miss a meal, depending on the time of day **you will be offered a hot meal or a cold snack on return.** Where possible, we will do our best to make sure you are on the ward during mealtimes.

If we don't offer you a meal, please let us know and we will sort this out for you.

Protecting your mealtimes

We are committed to ensuring all your mealtimes are free from interruption – allowing you the time and space to eat what you need to get better. Protected mealtimes allow ward staff to dedicate their time to the meal service and give their full attention to you and other patients without unnecessary interruptions. This gives you the chance to enjoy your food without unplanned visits from hospital staff, drug rounds or routine tests. However, if you have been referred to a speech and language therapist for assessment of your swallowing, they may need to carry out assessments during your mealtimes.

It would be helpful to ask relatives and carers to avoid telephoning the ward during a mealtime.