

Mealtime process – receiving and service

General points

- All staff are required to wash their hands prior to meal service
- Staff are required to put on a clean plastic apron immediately prior to handling and serving food and beverages. This must be replaced each time non-food handling duties are carried out
- Menu cards/ copy of patient meal choices should be retained on the ward for 90 days.
- Ensure when serving food appropriate utensils such as tongs are used.
- Clean crockery, cutlery, utensils should be stored clean and dry and ready for use in the kitchen.
- A person must be designated as responsible for discarding any remaining food at the end of a meal service.

The following must always be adhered to:

Hot foods

- After each meal, **all surplus food is to be disposed of** or returned to the kitchen as soon as possible.

Hot trolley

- If food is delivered in a heated unit, it should be plugged in on arrival.
- The container lids must not be removed until food is to be served.
- Food temperatures should be checked prior to serving according to local protocol and temperatures must be recorded (this should be above 63°C for hot foods and below 8°C for cold foods such as sandwiches and salads).
- If there are concerns over food temperature, ward staff should contact the senior staff member from the kitchen which supplied the food for advice on suitability for consumption or disposal. On no account should the health and safety of patients/clients be put at risk.

Plated meal service

- Ideally **all meals** should be served immediately on arrival on the ward or department.
- No hot meals should be served to patients after a period of 90 minutes has elapsed from time of delivery.

Cold foods

- All plated cold foods should be placed in a refrigerator on arrival.

- Cold foods, for example plated salads, should never be stored on top of or near hot food storage appliances.
- Cold foods, for example pre-packed sandwiches that are not consumed at the dedicated mealtime must be covered, labelled, dated, and refrigerated. Thereafter they must be consumed within 24 hours or discarded.

Provisions

- Provisions include butter, jam, cereals, biscuits, sugar, bread, etc.
- All provisions must be stored correctly as soon as possible after delivery. I
- Inspect packaging for damage and check the use by date on receipt and before use.
- Storage must be in suitable containers to ensure freshness. These containers must be emptied and washed preferably in dishwasher before replenishing.
- All food should be used on a '**first in, first out**' stock rotation.
- Dietary products, such as supplements recommended by the dietician, must not be allowed to stockpile. It is also imperative that correct stock rotation is always adhered to.