

## Protected meal times – what does it mean?

### Introduction

The presentation, colour, aroma, taste and texture of food in hospitals are all important to ensure that meals are tempting even to those with the poorest appetites. The only true measure of success is how much food is eaten. We have introduced a protected mealtime service to help get the most of the food provided.

### What is a protected meal time service?

This is a period of time over lunch, when all activities, on the wards will stop. The nurses, catering staff and volunteers will be available to help serve the food and give assistance to patients who may need help. This will prevent unnecessary interruptions to mealtimes.

### Why is it a good idea?

Patients themselves say they would prefer to eat their meals with less distraction on the ward. Other hospitals have already introduced the service and found that patients eat better and recovered more quickly. It creates a more relaxed and calm atmosphere giving patients time to socialise and digest their food.

### Who'll be on the ward then?

As well as the patients the only people on the ward will be nursing staff, catering staff, housekeeping staff and volunteers, all with the same aim, to help, encourage and monitor the patient's food intake during their meal time and make it an enjoyable experience.

However, all emergency treatments will still be dealt with.

### What can relatives or visitors do to help?

If you normally visit at mealtimes in order to help your relative or friend to eat or just to give encouragement, we are happy for you to continue to do this. Please ask the nurse in charge how you can help out.

If possible please try to avoid telephoning the ward for information during these times, so the staff can concentrate on helping the patients.

**If you have any worries or concerns about this, then please speak to the nurse in charge.**

### Important information

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. It is not definitive. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please be warned that it is always subject to change.

### Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: (01323) 417400 Ext: 5860 or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.**

**Tel: (01424) 755255 Ext: 2620**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

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