



A fact sheet for aged care residents

Enjoying dining in aged care

This fact sheet outlines what you and your care team can do to make your dining experience enjoyable.



The dining experience includes the food and drinks provided, the service you receive and the atmosphere. A good dining experience improves your wellbeing and increases your quality of life.

Why it matters

Research shows that a good dining experience increases your enjoyment of food and drinks. Eating well helps you to stay well-nourished and healthy. It can reduce the likelihood of weight loss, malnutrition, frailty, falls and poor health.

How it's done

Your dining experience should be enjoyable, respectful and meet your preferences, regardless of where, when, what and how you eat and who you dine with.

Food choices must be within reason and reasonably practical for the provider to deliver.

Your food and dining care team includes food service staff, care staff, as well as chefs and cooks who should be trained in preparing food for older people. They should work with you as a team.





An enjoyable dining experience should meet the Aged Care Quality Standards



Standard 1: Consumer dignity and choice

"I am treated with dignity and respect, and can maintain my identity. I can make informed choices about my care and services, and live the life I choose."



Standard 2: Ongoing assessment and planning with consumers

"I am a partner in ongoing assessment and planning that helps me get the care and services I need for my health and wellbeing."



Standard 4: Service and Support for Daily Living

"I get the services and supports for daily living that are important for my health and wellbeing and that enable me to do the things I want to do."

Your care team should consider those factors when planning your dining experience:

- ✓ **Understanding your likes and dislikes**
Your care team should know where and when you like to eat, who you like to eat with, what and how much you eat and drink, and how you like your meal presented.
- ✓ **Checking in with you as your likes and dislikes may change**
You can change your mind about your likes and dislikes at any time e.g. you may want to dine in your own room one day and socialise with others in the dining room another day.
- ✓ **Providing dining options to support your likes and dislikes**
This may include extended mealtimes, so you can eat when it suits you; buffet meals; self-service; and ordering from a menu so you can choose your own food and drink.
- ✓ **Providing access to snacks at any time of the day**
This allows you the opportunity to choose when you eat.





✓ **Engaging with you during mealtimes**

Staff should be available to support you and provide mealtime assistance if you need or request it, and engage in conversations when time allows.

✓ **Respecting your dignity**

Your dignity should always be respected regardless of how, where and what you eat.

✓ **Respecting your cultural, religious and dietary imperatives**

This may include culturally-appropriate food and cutlery, such as chopsticks, spoons, forks and handwashing bowls, and providing time for cultural prayer or traditions during mealtime. Remember, your preferences are important and should not be overlooked.

✓ **Providing meals and snacks that look, smell and taste appealing and are served at an appropriate temperature and texture**

This is regardless of when or where you choose to eat and how far you are from the kitchen.





You should feel comfortable discussing your likes, dislikes and preferences with your care team, including:

- ✓ **Asking to share a meal with your family**
You can request a quiet place to dine with your family and friends, away from the dining room. If your family members do not live close by, you can ask staff to organise a video call with them during meal times.
- ✓ **Asking to meet with chefs and cooks to let them know what you think of the food and offer suggestions for recipes, meals and snacks**
Chefs, cooks and care staff can share a meal with you too, if time allows.
- ✓ **Making suggestions about your dining experience**
This may include your thoughts on the menu or what the dining room and table settings look like.
- ✓ **Feeling confident that you can provide feedback to staff or your aged care provider about your meals and dining experience and that the feedback will be respected and welcomed**
You should be able to provide feedback without being perceived as a nuisance or experiencing any negative ramifications.



Some staff may be unfamiliar with your needs, likes and dislikes.

Let them know about your meal preferences and requirements including what you like to eat and how much, how often you want to eat and any assistance you would like.

You can fill in a 'Food and dining preferences sheet' at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resource-library/food-and-dining-preferences-fact-sheet and ask for it to be available in your room.





What to do if you are concerned about your dining experience

1. Talk to your aged care provider.
2. Ask your care manager to contact a dietitian, speech pathologist or occupational therapist to arrange a consultation.
 - Dietitians can look at your nutritional needs and menu plan and recommend the best meals and dining experiences for you.
 - Speech pathologists can check your swallowing and advise on strategies to support safe eating/drinking.
 - Occupational therapists can advise on any support you may need to eat and drink independently, such as modified cutlery, crockery, chairs and tables.
3. Phone the Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN) Support Line on **1800 700 600**
8am – 8pm Monday to Friday
10am – 4pm Saturdays

OPAN supports older people and their representatives to address issues related to Commonwealth-funded aged care services.
4. Phone the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline on **1800 844 044** (free call),
9am – 5pm AEDT, Monday to Friday
if you wish to speak with professionals about issues, ideas or concerns in relation to an enjoyable food, nutrition and dining experience in an aged care service. Alternatively, you can contact the Commission's general enquiries line on **1800 951 822** (free call).

More information

Additional fact sheets are available at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/older-australians/health-wellbeing/food-and-nutrition:

Dining

- Your dining experience poster
- Your choices matter fact sheet

Choice

- Making choices about your food, drink and dining experience in aged care fact sheet
- Food and drink in your aged care home – your right to choose and take risks poster
- Your right to make choices about food, drink and your dining experience in residential aged care poster

Charter of Aged Care Rights

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/older-australians/your-rights/charter-aged-care-rights

Aged Care Quality Standards

www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/quality-standards



Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
GPO Box 9819, in your capital city