



A fact sheet for aged care residents

Making choices about your food, drink and dining experience in aged care

This fact sheet provides an overview of how your care team (cooks, chefs, food service and care staff) can support you to make ongoing, informed choices about your food, drink and dining experience.



The Charter of Aged Care Rights states that you must have control over and make choices about your care, and personal and social life, including where choices involve personal risk.

Why choice matters

Having choice is a human right and this right does not change as you age or move into residential aged care.

Your aged care provider and their staff are required to support you to make informed choices. They must treat your choices with dignity and respect.

Making choices about your food, drink and dining experience means you can consume the foods you want, in the way you want, which supports good health and improved quality of life.



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."

How it's done

Your care team must support you to make choices about all aspects of your food, drink, meals and dining, even if that involves taking informed risks.

The choices you can make include:

- ✓ what you eat and drink
- ✓ how much you eat and drink
- ✓ when and where you eat or drink
- ✓ where you sit
- ✓ who you sit with
- ✓ what utensils you use
- ✓ cultural options e.g. food, cutlery and rituals around eating
- ✓ whether you have support or assistance during meals, including wearing clothing protectors.

Your care team must take the time to get to know you, ask your preferences and offer options at every meal.

You can be involved in the planning of your meals and dining including:

- ✓ providing feedback after meals
- ✓ contributing to a resident food committee
- ✓ helping to design the dining room set up
- ✓ taking part in food tastings
- ✓ designing the menu with the chefs and cooks
- ✓ providing suggestions or recommendations for meals and recipes.

Allied health professionals such as dietitians, speech pathologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists or dentists may make recommendations about the best food, drink and dining experience for you. They must let you know the reasons for their recommendations and provide enough time for you to consider the recommendations and to make a decision.

Your care team must give you all the information and time you need to make an informed choice.

You can change your mind about any choice or decision at any time.

Your care team must regularly check in with you about your preferences and record any changes.





What about 'risky' choices – dignity of risk

Sometimes you may choose to accept a risk so that you can live the life you choose. This is known as **'dignity of risk'**.

You can make an informed choice around risk. Your care team and health team (allied health, GP, specialist) must give you:

- information on the degree and severity of the risk, such as whether there is a minor or significant risk of coughing or choking
- information on why a particular choice may be harmful to you, or harmful to others e.g. distressing for staff and other residents to see you cough or choke.

Your choices must not place others at risk. Your aged care team will help you to find a solution that avoids risk to others.

For more information on dignity of risk and things you need to consider when making choices that may be risky, you can read the following fact sheets which are available at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/consumers/food-dining-and-nutrition

- Informed choice and supported decision making for people who eat and/or drink when there may be a risk
- Nutrition and texture modified food and drinks: eating drinking when you have problems with swallowing



Eating the foods you enjoy is an important part of your quality of life but sometimes they may be considered risky.

You can choose to accept risk, for example:

- having certain foods such as sugar, salt, butter, take-away or 'fast food' or food cooked by family.
- accepting the risk of food or fluids 'going down the wrong way' which may cause choking, coughing and infection, rather than eating texture modified food or drinking thickened fluids.



Ask to chat with the cooks and chefs

You can discuss your food, drink and dining experience. This is a great way for kitchen staff to know your preferences and what meals you enjoy.

It's also a good opportunity for you to provide feedback on the food and be involved in the design of the menu.





What to do if your choice is limited by your care or health team

If you have concerns, you can:

1. talk to your aged care provider in the first instance
2. 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

3. contact the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission on **1800 951 822** or visit agedcarequality.gov.au.

More information

Choice posters

Additional fact sheets on choice are available at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/consumers/food-dining-and-nutrition:

- Your right to make choices about food, drink and your dining experience in residential aged care
- Food and drink in your aged care home - your right to choose and take risks.

Swallowing fact sheets

Additional fact sheets on swallowing are available at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/consumers/food-dining-and-nutrition:

- Supporting safe and enjoyable mealtimes for people with swallowing difficulties fact sheet
- Nutrition and texture modified food and drinks: eating drinking when you have problems with swallowing
- Informed choice and supported decision making for people who eat and/or drink when there may be a risk fact sheet.

Aged care advocacy fact sheet at agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/aged-care-advocacy-fact-sheet.



Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

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