



## A fact sheet for aged care residents

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

July 2024

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.**

High-quality care should make you feel safe, well cared for and respected. The standards are designed to make sure you agree with the following statements that support your right to make informed choices about risks such as to:

- ✓ be treated with dignity and respect
- ✓ have my identity, culture and diversity valued and supported
- ✓ have control over and make choices about my care and personal and social life, including where the choices involve personal risk



- ✓ have control over, and make decisions about, the personal aspects of my daily life, financial affairs and possessions
- ✓ be listened to and understood.

## Why choice matters

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 are supported to consume the foods you want, in the way you want, which supports good health and improved quality of life and wellbeing.

## 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.
- ✓ choices about food must be within reason and reasonably practical for the provider to deliver.

## 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 mealtime strategies to support your health and dining experience. 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.



## What about 'risky' choices – dignity of risk

You have the right to live the life you choose in aged care. To make sure you can do this, it's vital that you let your provider know which goals, relationships and activities are important to you. This is called 'person-centred care'.

Another way you can live the life you choose is with '**dignity of risk**'. Risks, within reason, are an essential part of life. Your aged care provider should support you in taking managed risks to live a whole and happy life. This includes supporting you to make informed choices about your food, drink and nutrition care and services.

Eating the foods you enjoy is an important part of your quality of life but sometimes they might not be recommended for you, particularly if you have certain health conditions that could be impacted by eating these foods.

**This doesn't mean you can't eat the foods you like, the choice is entirely yours to make.**

If you do choose to eat foods or drink fluids that are not recommended for you it's important you understand what, if any of the risks might be and then what can be done to reduce these risks. This includes if you have swallowing difficulties.

Your service provider and other people involved in your care (i.e. allied health, GP, specialist) need to give you information about:

- how likely it is something might go wrong and how it might impact you and your health
- such as food or fluids 'going down the wrong way' which may cause choking, coughing and infection
- What could be done to reduce some of the risk.

To support you to make informed choices and decisions about the foods and fluids you eat and drink, your service provider can use an approach called 'EDAR' or Eating and Drinking with Acknowledged Risk. This involves:

- assessing your needs and talking to you about the results
- asking you what is important to you and what your preferences are
- giving you all the information you need in a way you can understand
- helping you to identify the benefits and risks that may be associated with your decision and to manage the risks
- reviewing you regularly
- making sure that the people who work with you know this information.

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 [Food and nutrition | Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#)

- Informed choice and 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.



### 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 service provider or care 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. Phone the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline on **1800 844 044** (free call), if you wish to provide feedback on food and dining in an aged care service or to make a complaint. Alternatively, you can contact the Commission on **1800 951 822** (free call).

## More information

### Choice posters

Additional fact sheets on choice are available at [Food and nutrition | Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#):

- 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 [Food and nutrition | Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#)

- 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 [Aged care advocacy – fact sheet | Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#)



### Phone

1800 951 822



### Web

[agedcarequality.gov.au](http://agedcarequality.gov.au)



### Write

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