



A fact sheet for providers



Dining in residential aged care – tips, tricks and what to avoid

The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's Nutrition and Dining Experience Expert Advisory Group has compiled a list of tips to ensure residents in aged care services enjoy their mealtime experience.



Allow adequate time for meals

- ✓ Provide residents with plenty of time to eat their meals. Some residents may need longer to eat and drink than other residents.
- ✓ Wait until the resident has finished the first course before serving the next.
- ✓ Ask the resident if they have finished before clearing away tableware.



Provide assistance to residents where required or requested

- ✓ Allow residents time to enjoy each mouthful and their meal as a whole.
- ✓ Explain to residents what the food is – especially if they are on a texture modified diet.
- ✓ Use the term ‘assist to eat’ when referring to residents who need assistance, rather than terms such as ‘a feed’ or ‘feeds’.
- ✓ Use visual prompting.
- ✗ Avoid ‘shovelling’ in food or rushed eating.
- ✗ Avoid stirring and/or mixing the food.
- ✗ Don’t mix texture-modified meals all together. It’s undignified.

Sit with residents during mealtime



- ✓ Sitting with residents during mealtime will help you to identify if they need assistance or they are not eating well.
- ✓ Focus on engaging and connecting with the resident. Where possible, avoid taking calls or becoming distracted by chatting with colleagues while dining with residents.
- ✓ Have as many staff as possible in the dining room during mealtime to ensure the needs of residents can be met. Try to avoid rostering staff breaks during mealtime or attending to other non-urgent tasks. A ‘rushed’ environment affects residents’ enjoyment of mealtimes.

Consider food presentation



- ✓ Ensure food is presented nicely - including if it is texture modified.
- ✓ Provide picture menus for residents with reduced cognition and/or communication difficulties.
- ✗ Avoid applying judgement to meals e.g. pulling faces if something does not appear appealing to you.



Create an enjoyable and respectful dining experience and atmosphere

- ✓ Set up the dining room in advance of mealtime with tablecloths, cutlery, flowers etc. This provides contrast and a visual cue to residents that mealtime is about to occur.
- ✓ Provide options for residents to dine at a table for one or at a table for more than one.
- ✓ Ask residents if they have finished before clearing their plates away.
- ✓ Clear used plates between each course.
- ✓ Reduce glare and background noise during mealtimes.
- ✓ Provide contrast in the dining environment.



Provide cultural options

- ✓ Provide culturally-appropriate food
- ✓ Provide culturally-appropriate cutlery including chopsticks, spoons, forks and handwashing bowls for those who want to use their hands to eat.
- ✓ Support residents to sit with only women or men if that is their preference.
- ✓ Provide time for cultural prayer or traditions during mealtime.



Avoid using clothing protectors

- ✓ To maintain residents' dignity, only use clothing protectors if the resident requests them or they are absolutely necessary for excessive food spillage.
- ✓ Use alternatives such as serviettes where possible.
- ✓ Use modified cutlery and/or raise the table to assist residents to eat without spillage.
- ✓ If clothing protectors are used, do not refer to them as 'bibs' as this is undignified.



Support independence

- ✓ Encourage independence and dignity by supporting residents to do as much as they can themselves.
- ✓ Ensure each resident has their glasses, dentures, hearing aids etc. before their meal is served.
- ✓ Make sure residents can reach the table and their meal.
- ✓ Make sure the table and chair is at the right height for each resident, where appropriate.
- ✓ An occupational therapist can recommend appropriate modifications. Where recommended, provide items like modified cutlery and plate bumpers to increase the resident's ability to eat independently. Ensure staff are trained in the correct use of these items.

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).

 **1800 844 044**

Food, Nutrition and Dining Hotline
Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm AEDT



Phone

1800 951 822



Web

agedcarequality.gov.au



Write

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