

Protected meal times

Protected meal times are periods where eating and drinking are the focus. During these times, people are able to eat and drink in a clean, quiet and safe environment. Non-essential interruptions are limited, to allow staff to provide assistance and encouragement (NHSScotland, 2011).

Principles of protected meal times

Effective implementation

- Increase awareness in your area
- Appropriate signage is visible for staff and visitors
- Effective leadership
- Co-operation with all staff groups

Identify individuals

- Ensure individuals requiring assistance are identified and supported using local processes, eg red trays/mats/white boards

Preparation

- Individuals – hand washing, safe eating position
- Staff – hand washing and appropriate protective clothing
- Environment – clean and tidy
- Equipment – use available equipment, eg beakers

During meal times

- Safe staffing levels
- Minimise non-essential interruptions
- Ensure food and drink is within easy reach
- Provide assistance where required (open packets, cut up food, pour drinks)
- Support people to eat and drink where required
- Family, friends and volunteers may assist if this will encourage food and fluid intake and is safe to do so
- Provide positive encouragement to increase food and fluid intake
- Allow sufficient time for food and drink to be enjoyed

Documentation

- Complete appropriate paperwork relating to food and fluid intake timeously

Help us to make our meals matter

This document has been developed to support local quality improvement and monitoring. This is part of the 'Making Meals Matter' pack, developed by the Improving Nutritional Care Programme, Healthcare Improvement Scotland (2011).

Copies can be downloaded from www.nutritioncare.scot.nhs.uk and www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org