

Eating enough to support your recovery in hospital

Nutrition and Dietetic Service

Information for Patients


Last reviewed: June 2023

Next review: June 2026

Leaflet number: 909 Version: 2

During illness and after surgery, many people lose their appetite and find meal times a struggle. Good nutrition is really important to support your recovery so you should make sure the food that you do eat is as nourishing as possible.

On admission to hospital staff will carry out a nutrition screening check to highlight any risk of undernutrition (referred to as the 'MUST' score by staff). If you score 1 or more, the advice on this leaflet will help you:

- You will need to eat a variety of foods, choosing higher calorie or full fat options when possible. For example choose full cream milk in drinks and on cereal, and thick and creamy yoghurts rather than the diet ones.
- You will be given a paper menu to tell you about the dishes on offer at mealtimes. When choosing from the menu, higher calorie options will have this arrow symbol: 
- The 'Apetito smaller energy dense meals' section of the menu contains choices which have high nutrition in small portion sizes; ideal if you have a poor appetite.
- Whenever possible choose food which is high in protein, as protein is important for the body to recover. This includes meat, fish, beans, lentils, cheese, milk and yoghurts. If you feel full quickly, have your main meal rather than filling up on the starter / soup.
- You can add extra calories to your food by adding extra butter e.g. to mashed potatoes, jacket potato, vegetables, toast, bread rolls, and crackers.
- There is no need to rush your meal; it is fine to take a rest between the main course and the pudding if that helps.
- Make sure you choose something for each meal time, even if your appetite is small. It does not matter if you do not finish everything served.
- If you need help with eating or drinking, or opening packaging, please ask for help. A red tray can be used to help staff identify those needing help.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

- If you find ordering your meals difficult, a weekly meal planner can be completed for you, which staff can then use to order your meals for you.
- Try to choose some hot meals and/ or some hot puddings over the day, as these tend to have more protein and energy in them.
- When your appetite is poor it helps to eat 'little and often', so try and have something between meals as well. Snacks are available 3 times a day whilst in hospital; the full range will be listed on the snack menu.
- Nourishing drinks can also help to provide the nutrition you need. Try a glass of full cream milk between meals, a malted milk drink (Horlicks or Ovaltine) or hot chocolate.
- Complan or Aymes drinks from staff are also a good way to get extra nourishment. These come in a variety of flavours - strawberry, chocolate, vanilla, banana, chicken and vegetable.
- Whilst your appetite is poor the food you eat will be recorded on a chart, so your nutrition progress can be checked. You may be able to help staff with completing this.
- You should be weighed regularly whilst in hospital. If you start losing, or continue to lose weight, please ask your nurse to inform the ward dietitian.
- Friends and relatives may bring foods and snacks in for you, but these must be in accordance with trust guidelines. This could include:



If you have previously been given advice from a health care professional to follow a specialised diet, you will need to continue with this. If you are unsure how this will combine with the advice given here, or are struggling with a part of your diet, please speak to your doctor, nurse or dietitian, for guidance.

If you are still struggling with your food intake when you are due to go home you should get further guidance from your doctor, nurse or dietitian. Please ask if you are unsure.

Once you have recovered and your appetite returns to normal, it is advisable to return to eating a healthy balanced diet.

Contact details

Nutrition and Dietetic Service: 0116 258 5400

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk