
Need to Know for Patients and Families

*What patients
and their
families need to
know before
hospitalization
or a nursing
home admission*

Meals and Nutrition

Why Is It Important? Older adult patients often experience loss of taste and a decrease in saliva, making eating less enjoyable. Maintaining adequate nutrition and hydration during and after a hospital or long-term care stay is critical to recuperation and reducing length of stay in the hospital or long-term care facility.

Getting out of bed for meals will keep you moving and shorten your length of stay.

According to the Department of Health & Human Services, “study after study shows that adequate food and nutrition is vitally important for promoting health, decreasing the risk of chronic disease, maintaining functionality, and helping older adults remain independent...”

What You Can Do:

1. Bring a list of favorite foods you ordinarily have at home...snacks and meals you enjoy and digest well.
2. Make sure you receive the right foods if your health care team has you on a special diet.
3. Ask your nurse or other team member for any help you may need to sit up or get out of bed for your meals.
4. Try to eat your meals in a chair.
5. Ask your health care team if a dietitian consultation for a dietary evaluation would be beneficial.
6. Use the communal room for dining, if available.
7. Be “mindful” of eating. Eat without watching TV or reading the newspaper.
8. Chew your food 30 to 50 times per bite.
9. Eat as much food as served as possible to get the most nutritional value.
10. Keep your mind active by conversing with your family, friends, roommates, and health care team members.