

## Office of the Chief Nurse

# Protected mealtimes



## Information for patients, visitors and relatives

### Introduction

Protected mealtimes are in place on all wards to ensure that patients have a dedicated mealtime, free from as many interruptions as possible. Protected mealtimes will help create a quiet, relaxed atmosphere for patients to enjoy their meal.

Protected mealtimes will vary between wards but will generally be:

- Lunch: 12:00 – 14:00
- Dinner/Supper: 17:00 – 19:00

For details of specific wards protected mealtimes see the individual [ward information](#) leaflets.

### What are protected mealtimes?

This is a period of time set aside for lunch and dinner when all non-essential activities on the wards will stop. The nurses and ward assistants will be available to serve the food and give help to patients who may need it. This will prevent unnecessary interruptions to mealtimes.

The presentation of food in hospitals is important to ensure that meals are tempting, even to those with the poorest appetites. The only true measure of success is how much food is eaten. We have introduced a protected mealtime service to help our patients get the most nutrition and benefit from the food provided.

### Red trays, jugs and beakers

Some patients may be given their meals/drinks on a red tray, jug or beaker. This is a prompt to staff that these patients may need additional support or assistance with eating their meals or having drinks.

### Who will be on the ward at mealtimes?

As well as the patients, the only people on the ward will be nursing staff, ward assistants, carers/volunteers trained to assist patients with their meal. They will all have the same aim: to help, encourage and monitor the patient's food intake during their mealtime and make it an enjoyable experience.

**Please be assured that all emergency treatments will still be dealt with.**

## Missed meals

If you are an inpatient and you miss a meal because you are absent from the ward for a procedure or felt unwell please talk to the nursing staff who will be able to arrange a hot meal or snack box for you.

## What can relatives or visitors do to help?

If you are visiting a ward please respect the wards protected mealtime and only visit during visiting times.

If you normally visit at mealtimes to help your relative or friend eat, or just to give encouragement, we are happy for you to continue to do this. Please ask the nurse in charge how you can help.

If possible, please try to avoid telephoning the ward, or your relative, for information during these times so the staff can concentrate on helping the patients with their meal.

Together we can make sure that all our patients are given the appropriate help and the required time to eat and enjoy their meals uninterrupted. This is a key requirement for good nutrition and will help them to recover more quickly.

## Contacts

Please talk to the nursing staff if you have any questions regarding protected mealtimes.



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

### Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

[patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)



## Document history

Authors	Senior Clinical Nurses and Deputy Chief Nurse
Department	Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ <a href="http://www.cuh.org.uk">www.cuh.org.uk</a>
Contact number	01223 586583
Publish/Review date	March 2011/March 2013
File name	Protected_mealtimes_patient_information
Version number/Ref	3/PIN0789