

# Protected Mealtimes and the Red Assist System

## Patient Information



The Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website is available on the link:  
<https://www.wwl.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets> or scan the QR code.

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## What are protected mealtimes?

This is a period over breakfast, lunch, and tea, when all non-urgent activities on the ward will stop. The nurses, ward housekeeper, catering staff and volunteers will be available to help serve the food and drinks and give assistance to any patients who may need help with their meals. Protected mealtimes may be different on each ward, therefore, please see the posters displayed on each ward.

## Why is it a good idea?

Protected mealtimes allow patients to eat their meals in a calm and relaxing environment without any unnecessary interruption. It allows the nursing staff to monitor and assist patients in meeting their nutritional needs and aims to enjoy and benefit from their food whilst in hospital.

## Who will be on the ward?

Apart from the patients, the only other people on the ward will be nursing staff, catering staff, volunteers and other staff who are helping with the meals.

**All emergency treatments will still be carried out.**

## What can relatives or visitors do to help?

If you are visiting a ward displaying the protected mealtimes poster, please respect this and try to visit outside of mealtimes.

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

If possible, please try to avoid telephoning for information during protected mealtimes so that the staff can concentrate on assisting their patients.

If you have any worries or concerns, please do not hesitate to talk to a member of the nursing staff or ward manager.

## The red assist system

This ensures that all patients requiring support to eat, and drink are identified and assisted.

## Why the red assist system?

A red place mat at mealtimes and a water jug with a red lid provides a signal that vulnerable patients need support from staff when eating and drinking.

## What happens when the mealtime has finished?

Patients who are included in the red assist system will not have their dishes removed before a member of the nursing staff has checked that they have finished their meal. A nurse will complete a food and fluid record chart documenting how much the patient has had to eat and drink.

## Patient menus

A weekly menu is available offering a choice of dishes for each meal. You can find a copy of the menu on your bedside cabinet (if there is not one there, please tell a member of staff who will provide one). Specialised meals including vegetarian, Halal, Kosher, and modified texture meals are available too. The catering staff will take orders directly for specialised meals when they visit the wards each day. If you have any specific dietary requirements, likes or dislikes please let the nursing staff know and arrangements can be made for your needs to be met.

You will be offered a hot or cold drink at regular intervals on the ward. If you miss a meal we can provide you with a hot snack, sandwiches, and toast. Tea, coffee, fruit juices and water are available at anytime of the day.

## Snacks

Snacks are delivered to the ward during the day to supplement the meals already provided at WWL. If you have any requirements, please speak to staff.

## Supplements

On the wards, the nurses can offer “build up” soups and milkshakes in a variety of flavours. The dietitians can also prescribe supplements including juices, milkshakes, and desserts if patients are not meeting their dietary needs.

## Contact information

Please do not hesitate to speak to a nurse or the ward manager if you have any questions regarding protected mealtimes.

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## Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

## Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

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## Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



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## How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

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This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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