

Hospital Hydration Best Practice Toolkit

8 Hospital guidance and standards

This fact sheet provides information on the advice and best practice currently available to healthcare professionals.

Hospital Caterers Association, Good Practice Guide - Healthcare Food and Beverage Service Standards

“In a wholesome diet, water must be considered as one of the six basic nutrients.....It might properly be called the ‘first nutrient’, since all of the body’s important chemical reactions – such as the production of energy – take place in it.....Chilled water should be available at ward level for patients throughout the 24 hour patient day. It is recommended that patients should be drinking 2.5 litres of water a day, or half a litre with each meal.”

NHS Quality Improvement Scotland, Clinical Standards – Food, Fluid and Nutritional Care in Hospitals.

(4.4) Food and fluid are provided to patients at the correct temperature and texture. Where required, patients are given assistance with eating/drinking while the food/fluid is at the correct temperature.

(4.6) Patients are provided with the equipment/utensils for eating/drinking that meet their individual needs.

(4.8) Where clinically appropriate, patients have access to fresh drinking water at all times.

(4.9) Where clinically appropriate, patients are given the opportunity to choose whether to eat/drink at or away from their bed.

National Patient Safety Agency, Water: the Forgotten Nutrient - From Pipe to Patient

“Water is well known for its revitalising properties. However, although it is essential to health and it is one of the six basic nutrients (along with carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, proteins and minerals), the importance of water often gets overlooked. Providing fresh water to patients helps to keep them hydrated and improves their wellbeing. Providing fresh water also demonstrates care of patients in a way that relatives and visitors can see.”

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Royal College of Nursing, Nutrition Now - Principles for nutrition and hydration

"Food and water are essential elements of care - as vital as medication and other types of treatment. Ensure that there are enough nursing staff on wards and in the community to ensure patients receive the right food and hydration at the right time with the right supervision and assistance. It is our responsibility as members of a multi-disciplinary team to ensure patients in our care have the right nutrition and hydration at the right time. Working practices that prioritise nutrition and hydration can overcome the challenges that stand in the way of excellence".

Welsh Assembly Government: Guidance for Health and Social Care Staff - Improving the quality of fundamental aspects of health and social care for adults, Eating and Drinking.

Proper nutrition, that is food and drink, is important for recovery from illness, for the healing of wounds and for good health..... People must be offered a choice of food and drink that meets their nutritional and personal requirements and provided with any assistance that they need to eat and drink. Make sure that fresh drinking water is always available. If you are unsure about how long water has been in a glass or jug, change it.

Inappropriate levels of nutrition and hydration can lead to rapid deterioration in frail, vulnerable people. If you have any worrying observations about your patient, report these and seek further advice. Always provide the direct help that people need in order to eat and drink. Never leave a drink out of the reach of your patient. Always tell your patient when you have refreshed their glass or mug and tell them where you have placed it.

(9.1) People's nutritional needs and physical ability to eat and drink are regularly assessed. If necessary, they are provided with specialist advice and support.

(9.3) Food and drink are served in an acceptable setting. They are at the right temperature and attractively presented.

(9.7) If eating and/or drinking cause people difficulties, they receive prompt assistance, encouragement and appropriate aids or support.

Department of Health - Independent Health Care, National Minimum Standards Regulations, Catering Services for Patients, Standard C19 (3)

"Drinking water is available in all inpatient and outpatient areas."

World Health Organization, Water, Sanitation and Health Guidance

"Water is a basic nutrient for the human body and is critical to human life. It supports the digestion of food, absorption, transportation and use of nutrients and the elimination of toxins and wastes from the body."