

Mealtime Experience Checklist

An audit checklist to review and improve the mealtime experience.

Name of Person Completing Checklist:
Care Setting:
Date:

Place a tick in one of the 3 boxes (in relation to your Care Home)		Yes	No	Partly
Before Meals – stimulate people’s interest leading up to the meal				
1.	Help Prepare Food Preparing food with people creates a sense of being at home. Even if people don't want to get involved themselves, watching someone else peeling and chopping vegetables can trigger memories and conversations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Setting the Table Where possible, people are encouraged to help to set the table and ensure sauces, salt, pepper, napkins, vases, etc are on the tables. Themes could be used for special events, time of year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Individualised Place Settings Use range of fun and individualised placemats and/or cups and mugs which reflect a person’s interest for example a picture of a place they love, colours of a sports team they support or birds for a bird lover. (However, people with visual perceptual problems might need plain coloured placemats).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Create Invitations for Interactions Put something on the table which might surprise or create a conversation e.g. a large seashell, a photograph of a dog or a clockwork toy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Stimulate Appetite Having a short walk outside to get some fresh air and exercise, looking at and discussing food/recipes before a meal to stimulate appetite.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Cues to mealtimes are used Smells that stimulate appetite, sounds, etc. (herbs, spices and flavours such as cinnamon or vanilla can be put in the microwave or oven to create smells or freshly baked bread)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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7.	Singing /soothing enjoyable music at mealtimes Provision of soothing and uplifting music during mealtimes that people enjoy, whilst knowing those who would prefer a quieter mealtime experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				
During Meals - special time and an opportunity to get to know someone better through conversation and dining with them				
8.	Comfortable Environment for Mealtimes There is a relaxed and social atmosphere, food looks visually appealing and colourful, and the area is well lit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Dining environment stimulates the senses - Familiar sounds of cooking, smells of the kitchen and food, touching/helping chop food, tasting food, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Sociability The mealtime experience is turned into an unrushed, social occasion and not a task.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	Staff and visitors are enabled and encouraged to participate in mealtimes. Team members and visitors eat and drink with people at tables. There is a clear plan for who will be serving the food and who will remain seated throughout the meal to create and maintain the social experience. People living with dementia are known to eat and drink better when they see others eating and drinking with them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Verbal and visual choice of meals and drinks are offered This can be achieved by use of pictorial menus, plating out a choice of meals on trays, showing several small portions, taking the person to see the food. Drinks served in glass or see-through jugs are more easily recognisable as blackcurrant or orange, for example.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Conversation at Mealtimes Use of chat cards with prompt questions and topics, pictures on walls, objects on the table, etc are used to stimulate conversation for those who enjoy this.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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14.	<p>Crockery and cutlery are visually appealing, easy to use and recognisable</p> <p>Plates should be plain, warm colours which are not food colours. (Avoid white or green as food like chicken or vegetables get lost on the plate with these colours). Avoid plastic and beige coloured cups which look institutional or child-like. Know who prefers a cup and who prefers a mug and when in doubt, ask!</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	<p>Engagement in Mealtime Tasks</p> <p>Whenever possible people are encouraged to serve themselves and each other at tables to enable choice and portion control, sustain skills in daily living and promote social interaction between people.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	<p>Unusual ways of eating are accepted</p> <p>Eating courses in the wrong order, mixing sweet and savoury foods together, pouring a drink over a meal are not judged or corrected.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p>				
<p>After Meals - should not be rushed but relaxed and take as long as it takes.</p>				
17.	<p>Serve coffee/tea/beverages at the table after a meal to allow residents time to relax and chat. Provide milk in jugs and sugar in bowls to encourage choice and independence.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	<p>Continue chatting in the living room area or remain at the table - bring some new things out to keep people's interest such as magazines, games or colouring pages.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Comments:</p>				

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Individualised Care				
19.	'Matched' mealtimes People with similar needs, abilities and interests are grouped together at mealtimes to ensure people feel comfortable with their mealtime companions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Individualised Assessment Each person's individual capabilities and preferences have been assessed and are known both in writing and by care and food services staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	Individual preferences are provided This means providing for preferences re food types, textures, meal/snack frequency and familiar routines.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	Provide a Variety of Drinks Try and vary the types of drinks on offer rather than the usual orange or cranberry juices. What about a beer or wine, an elderflower juice or a lemonade for a different experience?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	Specialist Assessment - is undertaken (e.g. speech language pathologist, dietician, occupational therapist, dental assessment) where there are concerns or an assessed need for example a swallowing difficulty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	Cultural and religious beliefs concerning food and eating are assessed for and provided.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	Changes to weight, eating and drinking habits recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.	Expressive emotions or 'behaviours' we find difficult in residents at mealtimes are seen as 'our problem' in not getting the mealtime experience right.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				

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Meals and Food				
27.	All food is presented in an appetising manner. Particular efforts are made to make soft food diets more visually appealing using moulds etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28.	Nutritious snacks and drinks - are visible, accessible and available between meals, all day and night. Fresh fruit is more likely to be eaten if it is cut up and prepared rather than just sitting in a bowl.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.	Flexibility in the times of food service and offering favourite foods - at the times a person prefers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30.	Portion size is matched to each individual to prevent their feeling overwhelmed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.	Finger foods are provided to help people to recover early skills. e.g. finger food buffets. These can also be helpful for people to eat 'on the move'.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32.	Use of stool softener medications and high calorie food supplements are avoided - A well balanced diet and food that boosts calories, protein and roughage is provided, and aperients/stool softeners and supplements are utilised as a last resort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33.	Involvement in Menu Planning Residents are involved in menu planning and developing a menu that is appetising, appealing and includes familiar foods from their past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				

References:

Communication and mealtimes toolkit © NHS Dumfries and Galloway 2012

Factsheet 511LP – Eating and Drinking. © Alzheimer’s Society, 2017

Paine, Tracy. (2006). Marvellous Mealtimes – A strategy to improve residents’ meal time experiences. CLS Care Services Group.

Sheard, D. (2010). Achieving real outcomes in dementia care homes. Published by Dementia Care Matters.

Whear, R., Abbot, R., Thompson-Coon, J., Bethel, Al., Rogers, M., Hemsley, A., Stahl-Timmins, W and Stein, K. 2014. Effectiveness of Mealtime Interventions on Behavior Symptoms of People With Dementia Living in Care Homes: A Systematic Review. Journal of American Medical Directors Association. 2014; Vol 15 pp 185 – 193.