



# Protected Mealtimes

## Information for patients, visitors and relatives.

Protected mealtimes are in place on the 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.

Mealtimes will vary between wards, please see your ward information for details.

We have introduced a protected mealtime service to help our patients get the most nutrition and benefit from the food provided.

### **What are protected mealtimes?**

This is a period of time set aside for mealtimes when all non essential activities on the wards will stop to protect patients from avoidable interruptions. The nurses and care assistants will be available to serve the food and give help to patients who may need it. This will prevent unnecessary interruptions reducing the amount of clinical activities at mealtimes to only those which are essential. The nurses, health care assistants and where available meal time volunteers will be on hand to give assistance to patients who may need help.

Patients themselves say they would prefer to eat their meals with less distraction on the ward. Other hospitals have already introduced the service and found that patients eat better and recovered more quickly. It creates a more relaxed and calm atmosphere giving patients time to socialise and digest their food. [NHS, National Patient Safety Agency 2007 website]

### **Who'll be on the ward at mealtimes?**

As well as the patients nursing staff, care assistance and volunteers where available, will all be at hand with the same aim, to help, encourage and monitor the patient's food intake during their meal time and make it an enjoyable experience.



**However all essential and urgent care will continue to be delivered.**

### **Red tray, jugs lids and beakers**

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

### **What can relatives or visitors do to help?**

If you are visiting a ward displaying the Protected Mealtime Poster, please respect this and try to visit outside the registered mealtimes. If however the meals are over running during visiting times you are of course welcome to visit and assist your relative if required.

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

If possible please try to avoid telephoning the ward for information during these times, so the staff can concentrate on helping the patients.

### **Missed Meals**

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

Our aim is that together we can make sure 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.

***If you have any worries or concerns about this, then please speak to the nurse in charge, Ward Sister or Charge Nurse.***

Alternatively you may wish to contact the ward Matron