

Protected mealtimes and patient safety



“Right meal, right time, right help”

The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) has identified poor nutrition as patient safety issue. We believe that the Protected Mealtimes initiative has the potential to improve patient safety by ensuring that patients receive the right meal at the right time with the right amount of help.

Tips from frontline staff on making Protected Mealtimes work:

- Identify a champion to lead and promote Protected Mealtimes
- Use the Essence of Care: Food and Nutrition to benchmark your trust
- Communicate the results
- Engage with all healthcare professionals
- Involve your trust board
- Consider what needs to change – for example visiting times, ward rounds, diagnostic investigation times
- Promote prior to launch – let everyone (including patients and visitors) know what, when and how
- Provide education – the Protected Mealtimes CDROM can be ordered free of charge from www.nhs.nhs.uk/nutrition

How staff have achieved successful implementation, in their own words:

“After initial problems, most ward areas realised the importance of Protected Mealtimes to help patients eat in a quiet uninterrupted environment and this resulted in improved appetites in our patients”

Head of Trust Catering

“Personally I consider sister/charge nurses as key to ensuring this happens. We have developed a pack for wards to use when implementing Protected Mealtimes, which consists of guidelines, door signs, patient/visitors information leaflets” **Ward Manager**

“Be flexible and persist!” **Modern Matron**

The NPSA is leading on work to establish the link between improved patient outcomes and Protected Mealtimes. We're also working in collaboration with the Royal College of Nursing's 'Nutrition Now' campaign and the Council of Europe Alliance to promote Protected Mealtimes.

The full findings of an NPSA review to identify barriers and critical success factors to implementation of Protected Mealtimes will be available online shortly. For this and other information on the NPSA's work on Protected Mealtimes and nutrition, visit www.npsa.nhs.uk/nutrition