

Nutrition and Dementia

To help patients with dementia and their family or carer(s)



Changes in eating and drinking can be hard for people with dementia and their families. This handout has some tips that may help. If you have any questions or worries, please talk to your healthcare professional.

Common Nutrition Problems in Dementia

Some of these different reasons are listed in the table below along with some actions that can help:

Nutrition Problem	What can help
Trouble chewing or swallowing	- Choose soft foods like casseroles, egg dishes, custards/desserts - Choose nourishing drinks like milkshakes or smoothies - Check your dentures fit properly – see your dentist - If you sometimes feel like you can't swallow or are 'choking' you may need a swallow assessment from a speech pathologist
Not feeling hungry	- Snack regularly and enjoy high protein favourite foods - Choose a nourishing drink – these can sometimes be better tolerated - Keep your bowels regular, constipation can affect appetite
Forgetting to eat	- Keep snacks and food readily available, within reach and visible - Daily meal delivery like <i>Meals on Wheels</i>TM can be a reminder to eat - Prompts to eat from friends and family like a phone call or set regular reminders to eat like a phone alarm
Difficulty using cutlery	Food you can easily eat with your hands: Cheese & crackers, sandwiches, pizza, fish fingers, chicken strips, mini quiches, party pies, sausage rolls, fruit, biscuits, cake, muffins, sweets, chocolates
Difficulty cooking	- Meal delivery services - Ready to heat and eat microwave meals

Balancing Nutrition and Enjoyment of Food

In the early stages of dementia, keeping a healthy weight can support energy, strength, and recovery from illness. As dementia progresses, people often feel less hungry and may eat less. It's normal to lose some weight and muscle over time. When this happens, the focus should gently shift to making food enjoyable and easy to eat, rather than meeting every nutrition need.



What's "healthy" Can Change Over Time

As people with dementia eat less, what's considered "healthy" can change too. Foods like chocolate, full-fat dairy, or extra protein might seem unhealthy at first—but later on, they can help keep up weight and strength. The main goal is to make food enjoyable and nourishing. It's important not to follow strict "lifestyle" or diet plans, as these can sometimes lead to eating too little.

What Type of foods can help if you are losing weight without trying?

If you are worried about eating less and losing weight a high energy high protein diet may help. This means eating food with more protein and calories, like:

Full Cream Dairy	Animal products	Plant-based options
Milk	Beef	Tofu or Tempeh
Yoghurt	Chicken	Lentils
Cheese	Lamb	Beans
Custard	Pork	Chickpeas and chickpea products like falafel or hommus
Ice-cream	Fish	Soy milk/yoghurt
Cream	Seafood	Nuts and Seeds
Desserts	Eggs	Meat alternatives



Nourishing Drinks

It is possible to get all your nutrition with food however if you are unable to eat enough you may wish to try a protein powder or drink. The below options are available from the supermarket or chemist, these include:

Breaka™ flavoured milk	Rokeby Protein Smoothie™	Musashi High Protein Shake™
Ensure™	Up & Go Protein Energize™	Up & Go™
Sustagen™	Dairy Farmers Protein Smoothie™	OAK™ flavoured milk

Specialised nutritional supplements are available. Check with your doctor or dietitian.

Where to go for more help

Want to learn more?

Scan the codes below with your phone's camera to explore more tips and videos from trusted sources



'Dementia & Nutrition Challenges'
from NAQLD



'Eating and Drinking Well with Dementia'
From Dementia Australia

People you can talk to about your nutrition



- Your **GP (local doctor)**
- Your **Geriatrician** at The Prince Charles Hospital
- A **dietitian** at The Prince Charles Hospital can provide personalised advice.

Appointments are available in person or by video call (Telehealth).

If you are under the care of a Geriatrician at The Prince Charles Hospital you are eligible. If this interests you please ask to be referred.