

1. Why is nutrition important to me in hospital?

When you are ill you may need more energy, protein, vitamins and minerals than usual to help you recover. Food gives your body energy, protein, vitamins and minerals.

2. What is nutrition screening?

Nutrition screening is where a nurse or other member of staff checks your height and weight and asks about any recent changes in your weight and appetite. This will tell us if you are getting enough nutrition to meet your needs. Screening is done when you are admitted and then once a week.

3. What if I am not meeting my nutritional needs?

If you are not meeting your nutritional needs, we will start you on a plan to improve this. We will note down what you are eating to see if you are getting enough energy and protein. A dietitian may assess and advise you.

4. What times are meals served?

Meal times	
Breakfast	am
Midday meal	pm
Evening meal	pm

During meal times, we want you to eat and drink as much as you can. We try to reduce interruptions while you are eating, for example relatives visiting or us calling you out for tests. We only allow visitors to stay with you if they are helping you to eat and drink.

5. What is the regular hospital diet?

The regular hospital diet provides three meals and [] snacks each day. There is a variety of food choices. The regular hospital diet contains the nourishment you need to help you recover.

6. What should I do if I have a specific dietary need?

If you need a therapeutic diet, please tell one of the nurses when you are admitted. They can give you one of the following diets as appropriate.

Types of therapeutic diets available in hospital	
1. Low fibre	5. Energy-dense diet
2. No-added salt	6. Gluten-free diet
3. Renal diet	7. Light diet
4. Healthy eating diet (suitable for diabetes and/or heart disease)	

We can provide meals if you have a cultural, ethnic or religious dietary requirement. If you have difficulties using normal cutlery, we can give you specially-adapted cutlery.

7. What if I have a food allergy?

If you have a known food allergy, please tell nursing staff when you are admitted. Our menu shows the allergens in each food to help you make safe food choices.

8. What if I have difficulty swallowing?

Please tell nursing staff when you are admitted if you are on a texture-modified diet (changes to the texture of your food) or thickened drinks.

Textured modified diets you can get in hospital

Soft and bite-sized	Pureed
Minced and moist	Liquidised

If you find it hard to swallow, or if you notice coughing or choking when you eat or drink, a speech and language therapist may assess you. They may prescribe changes to the texture of food you eat. We will tell catering if you need a modified food texture.

9. What if I need help during mealtimes?

If you need help to eat and drink, please tell us when you are being admitted. We may give you a coloured food tray to show you need help. Nursing and health care staff will help you to eat. Visitors are welcome to help you to eat and drink. If you have dentures, please, bring them with you.

10. How do I order meals?

Catering staff will come to your bedside and will give you a menu of the food choices available each day. This information will be written down by the catering staff and sent to the kitchen where your food will be prepared.

If there is nothing on the menu you like, we will try our best to suit your food preferences.

11. Does the menu change?

Yes, there is a different menu each week for [] weeks and then it goes back to the original menu. The Nutrition and Dietetics and Catering Departments develop the menu.

12. Will I get snacks between my meals?

Yes, [] snacks will be provided daily.

13. How will I get water to drink?

We provide water jugs and we will replace them twice daily, unless you need thickened fluids.

14. What if I miss a meal for a test or a therapy?

If you miss a meal, catering staff will provide you with a replacement meal.

15. What if I am asked to fast?

If you are asked to fast for a medical reason the catering team will be informed. They will not take your order until you have finished fasting.

16. Hand hygiene

Please wash your hands before meals. Hand wipes can be used for those who have to stay in bed. Please ask a member of staff if you need assistance.

Other frequently asked questions about our food service

Are the meals made in the hospital?

Yes, the food is cooked in the hospital using a cooking method known as cook chill. We follow food safety guidelines for cook chill. This method involves:

- cooking meals,
- cooling them quickly to a low temperature
- storing meals below 3°C until it is needed to be served.

The food is reheated and is served it from a mobile buffet trolley.

Why can't I eat my meal when I feel hungry or when I'm ready for it?

The hospital kitchen prepares meals for hundreds of patients every day. These meals have to be kept either very hot or very cold to stop germs growing. The kitchen can't keep food safely at these temperatures for long, so to keep the food safe to eat, please eat your meal when you get it.

Why am I given information about allergens in my food?

Irish law requires that consumers are told about the allergens in their food.

Why do my sandwiches always taste cold?

We keep them at a low temperature to prevent germs and to keep food safe to eat.

We are always trying to provide the best possible service. Please give us your feedback.

