



FlexiLearnHub

Knowledge Hub

Professional Resources for Care, Catering & Hospitality

FREE PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE

Supporting Safe Mealtimes for People with Dysphagia

A Good Practice Guide for Care Staff

Knowledge Hub Resource 004

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www.flexilearnhub.com

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About This Resource

Supporting Safe Mealtimes for People with Dysphagia

A Good Practice Guide for Care Staff

Promoting Safe, Dignified and Person-Centred Mealtimes

Supporting individuals during mealtimes is an important part of providing safe, compassionate and person-centred care. For people living with dysphagia (swallowing difficulties), following agreed care plans and supporting safe eating and drinking practices can help promote comfort, dignity and wellbeing.

This guide has been developed by **FlexiLearnHub** to provide care staff with practical awareness of good mealtime practices when supporting individuals who have been assessed as requiring assistance with eating, drinking or texture-modified diets.

The guide complements organisational policies, individual care plans and professional guidance. It is intended to support awareness and should not replace practical training or advice from appropriately qualified healthcare professionals.

Purpose of this Resource

This guide has been designed to help readers:

- ✓ Understand the importance of safe mealtime support.
 - ✓ Promote dignity and person-centred care.
 - ✓ Recognise good mealtime practices.
 - ✓ Understand the importance of following individual care plans.
 - ✓ Support safer eating and drinking through teamwork and good communication.
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Suitable For

- Care Assistants
 - Senior Carers
 - Nurses
 - Care Home Managers
 - Support Workers
 - Catering Teams
 - Healthcare Assistants
 - Family Carers
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Important Information

This guide provides awareness of good mealtime practice only. It should always be used alongside individual care plans, organisational policies and guidance from Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs), dietitians and other appropriately qualified healthcare professionals. Care staff should never change food textures, drink consistencies or care plans without appropriate authorisation.

Continue Learning

Expand your understanding of dysphagia awareness, the IDDSI Framework and safer eating and drinking through the **FlexiLearnHub Dysphagia Awareness & IDDSI Framework Training Course**.

Visit:

www.flexilearnhub.com

Preparing for Safe Mealtimes

Preparing for Success

Good preparation helps create a safer, calmer and more enjoyable mealtime experience. Taking a few moments to prepare before serving food or drinks can help ensure that individuals receive the support they need while promoting dignity, comfort and confidence.

Every individual is different, which is why following their agreed care plan and documented mealtime requirements is essential.

Before Serving Food or Drinks

Good practice includes:

- ✓ Reading and following the individual's current care plan.
 - ✓ Checking that the correct meal and drink have been provided.
 - ✓ Confirming any documented IDDSI level or dietary requirements.
 - ✓ Ensuring the dining area is clean, comfortable and free from unnecessary distractions where appropriate.
 - ✓ Encouraging good hand hygiene before meals.
 - ✓ Making sure any required eating or drinking aids are available.
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Creating a Positive Mealtime Environment

A calm and supportive environment can help individuals feel more relaxed and comfortable during meals.

Good practice may include:

- Providing enough time to enjoy meals without feeling rushed.
 - Reducing unnecessary noise or distractions where appropriate.
 - Encouraging independence wherever it is safe and appropriate.
 - Respecting individual preferences, cultural needs and personal dignity.
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Remember

Every person's needs are unique. Always follow their individual care plan and any documented guidance when supporting eating and drinking.

Good Practice Reminder

Preparing for a safe mealtime begins **before** the first mouthful of food or drink is served.

Taking time to prepare can help support safer, more positive and person-centred mealtimes.

Supporting Individuals During Mealtimes

Providing Safe and Person-Centred Support

Every mealtime should be a positive experience that promotes dignity, comfort and independence. Individuals who have dysphagia may require additional support during meals, but they should always be encouraged to remain as independent as possible, in line with their assessed needs and care plan.

Supporting someone during a meal involves careful observation, good communication and following agreed care plans at all times.

During Mealtimes

Good practice includes:

- ✓ Following the individual's agreed care plan.
- ✓ Encouraging a calm, relaxed and unhurried mealtime.
- ✓ Allowing the individual enough time to eat and drink comfortably.
- ✓ Respecting personal dignity, privacy and independence.
- ✓ Remaining observant for any changes or concerns during the meal.
- ✓ Offering reassurance and encouragement where appropriate.

Promoting Dignity

Good mealtime care is about more than nutrition.

It also means:

- Respecting personal preferences where possible.
- Supporting choice and independence.
- Encouraging social interaction where appropriate.
- Providing meals that are presented attractively and served at an appropriate temperature.
- Helping create an enjoyable and positive dining experience.

Observe and Communicate

During every meal, remain aware of any changes that may indicate an individual requires further support.

If you notice concerns:

- Remain calm.
 - Follow local reporting procedures.
 - Share your observations with the appropriate senior member of staff.
 - Continue to follow the individual's current care plan unless professionally updated.
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Remember

Never make changes to food textures, drink consistencies or mealtime support without documented guidance and appropriate authorisation.

Good Practice Reminder

Safe mealtimes are achieved through:

 **Observation**

 **Communication**

 **Teamwork**

Following agreed care plans helps promote safe, dignified and person-centred care.

After the Mealtime

Continuing Good Mealtime Care

Supporting safe mealtimes does not end when a meal has been finished. Continuing to observe the individual, recording relevant information and communicating with the wider care team all contribute to providing safe, person-centred care.

Good communication helps ensure that any changes in an individual's needs are recognised and acted upon appropriately.

Good Practice After Meals

Following a meal, good practice includes:

- ✓ Ensuring the individual is comfortable and supported in accordance with their care plan.
 - ✓ Remaining aware of any signs of difficulty eating or drinking that may have occurred during the meal.
 - ✓ Recording relevant observations in line with your organisation's policies and procedures where required.
 - ✓ Reporting any concerns promptly to the appropriate senior member of staff.
 - ✓ Continuing to follow the individual's current care plan unless it has been formally reviewed and updated.
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Working Together

Safe mealtime support is a shared responsibility.

Care staff, catering teams, nurses, managers, Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs), dietitians and other healthcare professionals each play an important role in promoting safe eating and drinking.

Good communication between team members helps ensure continuity of care and supports positive outcomes for the individual.

Remember

Small observations can make a big difference. Promptly sharing concerns helps ensure individuals receive the appropriate support at the right time.

Good Practice Reminder

Every safe mealtime follows the same simple principles:

✓ **Prepare**

✓ **Support**

✓ **Observe**

✓ **Report**

Following these four steps helps promote safe, dignified and person-centred care.

Reflecting on Good Practice

Every mealtime is an opportunity to support an individual's wellbeing, dignity and independence.

By following agreed care plans, working as part of the wider care team and remaining observant, care staff play an important role in helping people enjoy safer and more positive mealtimes.

Continue Your Learning

Supporting Safe, Person-Centred Care

Recognising the possible signs of dysphagia is an important part of providing safe, compassionate and person-centred care.

By remaining observant, following agreed care plans and reporting concerns appropriately, care staff make an important contribution to supporting the health, wellbeing and dignity of those in their care.

Continued learning helps build confidence, strengthens professional practice and supports better outcomes for individuals who may experience swallowing difficulties.

Continue Your Professional Development

Expand your knowledge with FlexiLearnHub's professional online training, including:

- ✓ Dysphagia Awareness & the IDDSI Framework
- ✓ Nutrition & Hydration in Care Settings
- ✓ Dementia Awareness
- ✓ End of Life Care Awareness
- ✓ Infection Prevention & Control
- ✓ Safeguarding Adults
- ✓ Health & Safety in Care
- ✓ Food Safety & Hygiene

All courses are designed to support professional development, workplace compliance and high standards of care.

Related Knowledge Hub Resources

Continue exploring our growing collection of free professional resources.

Available Now



Resource 001

Care Home New Starter Induction Checklist



Resource 002

Understanding the IDDSI Framework – A Quick Reference Guide for Care Staff

Coming Soon



Supporting Safe Mealtimes



Texture-Modified Food Awareness



Helping Someone Eat and Drink Safely

More free professional resources are added regularly to the FlexiLearnHub Knowledge Hub.

Visit FlexiLearnHub

Explore our free Knowledge Hub resources and professional online training at:

www.flexilearnhub.com



Part of the FlexiLearnHub Dysphagia & IDDSI Awareness Series

- Resource 002 – Understanding the IDDSI Framework
 - Resource 003 – Recognising the Signs of Dysphagia
 - Resource 004 – Supporting Safe Mealtimes
 - Resource 005 – Texture-Modified Food Awareness (*Coming Soon*)
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Continue Your Learning

Building Knowledge Through Ongoing Learning

Understanding the IDDSI Framework is an important first step in supporting individuals with dysphagia and promoting safer eating and drinking.

However, awareness alone does not replace structured training, practical experience or guidance from appropriately qualified healthcare professionals.

Continuing your professional development helps build confidence, supports safer practice and contributes to high-quality, person-centred care.

Learning doesn't stop after induction. Ongoing training helps employees build confidence, maintain professional standards and continue developing the knowledge and skills needed to provide safe, effective and compassionate care.

FlexiLearnHub offers a growing library of professional online training courses and free workplace resources designed to support care, catering and hospitality professionals throughout their careers. Dysphagia Awareness Training within the IDDSI Framework Here at www.flexilearnhub.com

Recommended Training

Consider expanding your knowledge with courses including:

- ✓ Dementia Awareness
- ✓ Safeguarding Adults
- ✓ Infection Prevention & Control
- ✓ Health & Safety in Care
- ✓ End of Life Care Awareness
- ✓ Moving & Handling Awareness
- ✓ Nutrition & Hydration
- ✓ Food Safety & Hygiene Level 2
- ✓ HACCP Level 2
- ✓ **Dysphagia Awareness & the IDDSI Framework**

Explore More Free Resources

Visit the FlexiLearnHub Knowledge Hub for additional:

- Practical workplace checklists
- Awareness guides
- Professional advice sheets
- Training articles
- Downloadable resources

About FlexiLearnHub

FlexiLearnHub provides professional online learning, downloadable workplace resources and CPD-accredited training to support organisations and individuals working within the care, catering and hospitality sectors.

Our mission is to make professional learning accessible, practical and affordable while helping employers promote safer working practices, workplace compliance and continuous professional development.

Visit Us Online www.flexilearnhub.com

This guide forms part of the FlexiLearnHub Dysphagia & IDDSI Awareness Series, developed to support professional awareness, safer practice and continuous learning across health and social care settings.



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