If you eat well in hospital you are more likely to recover from illness quickly and go home sooner.

Unfortunately, as an older patient, you are at the greatest risk of becoming malnourished during your stay.

Older patients often report that:
• they don’t get help or encouragement to eat and drink when needed
• meals are placed out of reach
• the food served is inappropriate.

You can help to avoid this by telling the ward staff early on what your needs are and alerting them to any problems during your stay. It is your right to have a choice of food that is appropriate for you, and any help you need to eat it.

You can also ask someone - like a relative or friend - to act on your behalf.

Helpful Contacts:

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
You can ask on the ward or at the hospital reception desk for the PALS contact details.

Your local Age Concern:

Hungry to be Heard campaign
Age Concern England
Astral House, 1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER
Phone: 020 8765 7200
Email: htbh@ace.org.uk
Website: www.ageconcern.org.uk
Registered Charity no 261794
January 2007
1. **Raise any concerns on admission**
   On arrival, let the staff know if you:
   - have lost over half a stone in the last three to six months
   - have eaten very little in the last five to 10 days
   - suffer from diabetes, indigestion, alcoholism or take diuretics (water tablets).

2. **Ask to be weighed**
   You may already be malnourished, so ask to be weighed on admission and at regular intervals during your stay.

3. **Ask for help during mealtimes**
   The ward staff are there to help, so don’t be afraid to ask them for it. Let them know if you:
   - need help with eating and/or drinking
   - can’t reach your meal
   - can’t open containers or cut up food
   - have difficulty chewing or swallowing
   - find the menu options unsuitable because of your personal taste, special diet or religious beliefs
   - need help filling in the menu or identifying different foods on your plate
   - missed a meal, or received the wrong one, and want a replacement.

4. **Make eating easier for yourself**
   Let the ward staff know if there is anything that will help you to eat, like:
   - sitting in a chair, or upright in bed
   - special eating utensils
   - a puréed diet rather than solids.

5. **Ask about other nutritional support**
   - You can ask for light snacks throughout the day. These are especially important if you have asked for smaller main meals.
   - Don’t forget to drink regularly - aim for 8 glasses of water, or equivalent, a day. You can ask for thickened fluids if you find swallowing difficult.
   - Your visitors might bring you snacks and drinks. Ask the ward staff what’s allowed, and where they can be stored.

6. **Give feedback**
   If you have had a positive experience and have found something particularly helpful, the staff would be very pleased to hear it.

   If you have any concerns, raise them right away. There’s no need to feel embarrassed or worried. Ignoring a problem could put your health at greater risk.

   It is best to speak with the nurse in charge of the ward or the doctor in charge of your care first. A meeting time can be arranged for you (and your relative or friend if you’d like them to be with you).

   If your concerns haven’t been satisfactorily addressed, you can talk to the local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). It is set up specifically to resolve issues raised by patients, relatives and carers.

   You can ask on the ward or at the hospital reception desk for the PALS contact details.