

# Nutrition and Hydration Conversations

How To Guide



For readers who are new to the term “Age Friendly” it’s about recognising the challenges of an ageing population and looking at all the different ways that together we can rise to those challenges, fostering healthy and active ageing, making it possible for people to continue to stay in their own homes, participating in the activities they value and contributing to their communities for as long as possible.

This latest booklet is produced as part of the Age Friendly Salford programme. It brings together information which can help us all recognise when older people are undernourished or dehydrated.



The booklet will help provide simple information to increase weight and avoid dehydration. In particular, it provides the framework for important nutrition and hydration conversations to be had with someone you look after, care for or live with. This guide can be used in conjunction with our Training the Trainer guide which has been developed to train those who come into routine contact with older people. It should also be read alongside the resources and training materials developed by the Salford Malnutrition Task Force, part of Age UK Salford and Age Friendly Salford.

These are available at [www.ageuk.org.uk/salford/about-us/improving-nutrition-and-hydration](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/salford/about-us/improving-nutrition-and-hydration)



“ Following our participation in the Malnutrition Taskforce national pilot I prioritised developing partnerships between dietetics and the voluntary sector in Salford. We have built mutual respect, trust and a shared understanding of malnutrition and dehydration. This holistic approach has shifted the ethos in the clinical team to engage in our public health programme in Salford, whilst continuing to build partnerships with primary care and our care homes. We have witnessed their growth in confidence to tackle the issue of preventable malnutrition across the voluntary sector. This has allowed our partners to have meaningful conversations to promote good nutrition and hydration, whilst having the confidence that dietetic colleagues will accept referrals when needed. Overall, it has allowed us to jointly champion these issues and take a preventative approach. The partnership working has required commitment, hard work and leadership, but the difference it has made is tangible across the sector.

*Kirstine Farrer, Consultant Dietitian, Salford Royal Foundation Trust*

One million people in the UK over the age of 65 are malnourished, 93% of these are living in the community, with a further 5% living in care homes and 2% in hospitals. There are significant healthcare costs from malnutrition and malnourished people have a higher risk of ill health and a longer recovery time.

**It is estimated that 20% of older people are dehydrated. This leads to increased hospital admissions and is a major contributor to falls, Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs), low mood, confusion, loss of independence and mobility.**

**1 in 3 people aged 65+**  
are at risk of malnutrition admission to hospital

**Malnourished patients:**



**Three times**  
more hospital  
admissions



**Three days**  
longer length  
of stay



**Two or  
three times**  
higher cost  
of treatment



**Estimated cost  
of malnutrition  
in England**

**£19bn**

**20%**  
of older people  
are dehydrated

**47%**  
of older people who  
fall are dehydrated

**This booklet will help you to:**

- Understand the importance of good nutrition and hydration for older people
- Recognise the signs of undernourishment and dehydration
- Engage someone in a conversation about good nutrition and hydration
- Give easy to understand information to help someone gain weight or avoid dehydration
- Deliver a training session to staff and volunteers with help from the ‘train the trainer’ guide
- Find further information and resources

# Recognising and responding to undernourishment and dehydration

There are 4 steps to help someone recognise the need to put on weight or drink more fluid, then be able to do something about it:

- 1.** Look, listen and use the Paperweight Armband®
- 2.** Have a conversation
- 3.** Provide simple straightforward information and ideas
- 4.** Monitor food and fluid intake

## 1. Look and listen

There are many visual and verbal signs of possible undernourishment.

Visual signs of possible undernourishment:

- Loose dentures
- Loose collar or clothes
- Loose ring or watch
- Loose belt
- Thin arms or legs
- Loose shoes

Verbal signs of possible undernourishment:

- It's difficult to get to the shops
- I've lost weight without trying
- I feel tired all the time
- It's difficult to cook just for one
- I've got a poor appetite
- I find it hard to keep warm

## Dehydration: Signs and symptoms

- Confusion
- Headache
- Nausea
- Irritability
- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Constipation
- Risk of falls
- Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)
- Pressure sores

Dehydration can be a cause of many health and wellbeing problems. It often goes unrecognised until it becomes a major health issue.

## Using the PaperWeight Armband®

The PaperWeight Armband® is a simple, non-intrusive signposting tool that shows in an instant if someone is likely to be underweight. It provides staff and carers with a useful conversation starter and a quick test to signpost someone who may need to improve their appetite and increase their nutritional intake.



Search on Age UK Salford's YouTube channel for Nutrition and Hydration Conversations



## Ask: Nutrition and appetite

To engage someone in a conversation around nutrition and hydration, start by having a chat about appetite, eating, drinking and weight loss.



How are things with you, are you well?

How is your appetite these days?

You don't seem your usual smiley self... is everything okay?

I'm making a hot drink, what would you like?... The milk has gone off?

Which of the ready meals have you tried?

You haven't been going to ..... is everything okay?

Have you seen these Paperweight armbands? Let me show you how to give it a go?



## 2. Have a conversation

Conversations can be a part of a chat rather than directed questions.



- Have you lost weight without meaning to?
- Have you had a poor appetite, low energy or low mood?
- Do your clothes, shoes, jewellery or dentures look or feel loose?
- Do you think you might be underweight?
- Are you having 6-8 drinks a day?

Search on Age UK Salford's YouTube channel for Nutrition and Hydration Conversations

You can use the 'RED FLAG' questions below as a guide.

Refer to their GP if the person answers yes to any of the following:

- Have you noticed sudden weight loss (10% of body weight in 3 months)?
- Do you have difficulty swallowing food or drinks?
- Do you get a pain in your tummy when you eat?
- Have you had a recent, persistent change in your bowel movements to looser stools and/or increased frequency?

Anyone at risk of malnutrition should also be encouraged to see their dentist, particularly if they have a sore mouth.

## 3. Provide information

Our **Eat, Drink, Live Well Guide** provides simple steps to recovering from weight loss or dehydration. This is available from us or can be downloaded from the Age UK Salford website.



### Eat little and often

Try to eat every 2-3 hours even if it is only something small.

Use milk powder to fortify milk, sauces and soup

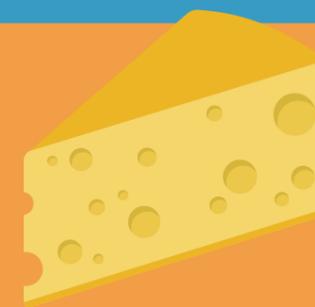
Buy a tub of skimmed milk powder to use for fortified milk and in sauces or soup.



## COMMUNITY CAFE

### Eat with others

Some people are having a shared lunch over a video call or watching a favourite programme whilst eating.



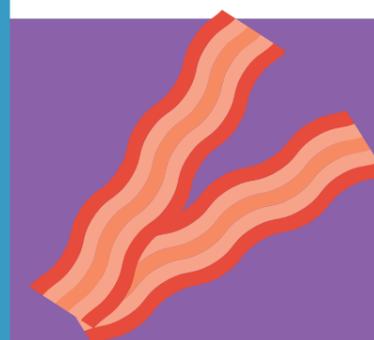
Add to your food to increase energy without increasing portion size

**Top tip:** Adding cheese to your mashed potato is not just tasty, it helps boost your calorie intake too.

**This is called fortifying food.**

### Have more protein

Add extra pieces of meat or tinned lentils into soups, casseroles, stews or pies.



### Make meal preparation easier

Stock your cupboards with full fat ready meals and snacks to heat in the microwave.

## 4. Monitor

Everyone should be drinking **6-8 cups of fluid a day**. Ask the person what their favourite drink is. There are many more interesting ways of taking fluid. **Monitor** food, fluid intake and mouth care. A simple table or chart can help someone keep an eye on what they are eating and drinking.

DAY			
BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER	SNACKS
I ATE, I DRANK			

## More information

All resources mentioned are available on: [www.ageuk.org.uk/salford/about-us/improving-nutrition-and-hydration](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/salford/about-us/improving-nutrition-and-hydration) or contact [carmelberke@ageuksalford.org.uk](mailto:carmelberke@ageuksalford.org.uk)

### PaperWeight Armbands®

**Eat, Drink, Live Well booklet**  
– tips to boost appetite and fortify food

**Food First recipes**  
– recipe ideas for high energy meals and snacks

**A5 Hydration Leaflet & Malnutrition signs & symptoms**  
– for raising awareness

**Staple cupboard recipes**  
– simple recipes using mainly tinned and frozen food

**Eating Well Affordably**  
– simple affordable recipes

**Meal and snack ideas from a range of cultures**  
– different ideas and recipes to try from different cultures

**Care Home kitchen posters**  
– food fortification/snacks

**E-learning tool** [www.paperweightarmband.org.uk](http://www.paperweightarmband.org.uk)

## Other useful websites

NHS Eat Well Guide – The Eatwell Guide – [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Eat Well Age Well – [www.eatwellagewell.org.uk](http://www.eatwellagewell.org.uk)

BAPEN – [www.bapen.org.uk](http://www.bapen.org.uk)

Malnutrition Task Force – [www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk](http://www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk)

Greater Manchester Ageing Hub Ageing Hub –

[www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/ageing-hub](http://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/equalities/ageing-hub)

Age Friendly Salford – [www.ageuk.org.uk/salford/about-us/age-friendly](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/salford/about-us/age-friendly)

