



Prioritising Wellbeing

Top Tips for Daily Nutritional Activities Family Carers and Friends

Food plays a large part in most of our lives. We all need it to live, and it is often the centre of many social activities. For some of us it can be an even more significant part of daily life as other activities decrease and mealtimes become key events of each day.

Wherever possible a food element should be integrated into other activities. For example, having tea, biscuits and a chat or holding special meals for themed events or celebrations such as Burns Night or Pancake Day/Shrove Tuesday. This can encourage conversation and connection and stimulate interest in food for those who may have a very small appetite.

Meal times

Each meal time should be viewed as an opportunity for conversation and connection with your relative.

Before the meal

The build up to a meal time can be an activity in itself. Your relative may enjoy helping to prepare for the meal time by assisting with tasks such as laying the table, folding napkins, or arranging flowers as table decorations. These simple 'everyday' tasks can help to provide a sense of purpose and allow your relative to feel they are contributing to daily life as opposed to always being on the receiving end of care. Visual signs that mealtime is approaching may also help to encourage appetites and provide a sense of anticipation for the meal. This can be increased by talking about what's on the 'menu' or pointing out the aromas of food cooking.

Your relative may be able to help with preparing the food, plating up the meal and serving it. Potential risks should be considered so accidents are prevented.

During the meal

Meal times should be relaxed and enjoyable, have fun!

Place an interesting object at the centre of the table e.g. a piece of driftwood, a shell, an interesting bottle or a food container and see if this promotes discussion. You could use a mystery object such as a garlic press or mincer and ask your relative if they know what it is for. Table mats with local or national town and country scenes, animals or flowers may also provide a starting point for conversation or simply something to look at.

After the meal

Your relative may gain a feeling of purpose from helping to clear the table and tidy up.

Relaxing after a meal may be a good opportunity for some interaction and chat about what they have just eaten and food in general.

Afternoon tea

Your relative might enjoy serving you afternoon tea and cakes! This is a great way of enabling your relative to contribute and provides a sense of purpose. They may have worked as waiters or waitresses in the past, so it can also be an opportunity for reminiscence and may help to provide a sense of familiarity if your relative is living with dementia.

Would you like?

At quieter times during the day, it may be a nice idea to share an 'edible treat.' This could be a box of chocolates to choose one from or a biscuit that was made together earlier. Small bowls of freshly cut fruit also make a healthy and colourful snack. This provides another opportunity for conversation and connection.

Food preparation

Some individuals may enjoy carrying out simple, but familiar food preparation tasks such as shelling peas, peeling vegetables or mixing pastry or a crumble topping. These tasks can provide a sense of useful occupation and encourage mobility. They may also be suitable if your relative is living with dementia.

Or just have a selection of foods in bowls on a table so that your relative can come up and touch, smell and taste them (where appropriate). These very 'open-ended' activities can encourage involvement as the person doesn't feel under pressure to 'do' or 'make anything particular.

If you would like to discuss the information included in this resource, please call the NAPA Helpline; our free and confidential activity support service.

