

The Dining Room Experience

WHAT

The dining room experience is very important in all life stages including Residential Aged Care. Consultation with the residents and staff and perhaps seeking advice from an expert (eg occupational therapist or interior decorator) about how to improve the dining room atmosphere can improve the quality of life of the residents.

WHY

Having an environment that is conducive to eating is important because it leads to improved physical and mental health of the residents through improved food intake and socialisation.

HOW

There are many ways to improve the dining room, for example:

- **Tablecloths** and **flowers** or **ornaments** that change for the occasion.⁽¹⁾
- **Round tables** that seat 4 - 6 people encourage conversation and socialisation.
- **Quiet background music** that fosters a peaceful environment.⁽¹⁾
- Giving residents (where possible) a **choice about where they sit and who with.**⁽¹⁾
- Supporting residents who spill or dribble food with **appropriate cutlery and clothes protectors** may reduce their level of embarrassment and in turn increase their enjoyment of eating.⁽²⁾
- In some cases it is possible for a resident (**'Buddy'**) to look out for another resident who may be experiencing difficulty in the dining room.⁽²⁾
- Having a scheduled group event such as **'Happy Hour'** will foster socialisation and food intake.⁽²⁾
- **Familiarity** - having the same staff member feed residents who require assistance (where possible) encourages trust and rapport.⁽²⁾
- Encourage **special events**, eg Christmas in July.⁽²⁾
- **Change the environment** occasionally, eg eat in an outdoor setting.⁽²⁾



WHEN

Making the dining room friendlier is appropriate any time.

WHO

Where practical encourage all residents to eat in the dining room because it may provide a stimulus for food consumption.

1. Well for Life. *Improving nutrition and physical activity for residents of aged care facilities* [Online]. In: Victorian Government Health.
2. Bartl R, Bunney C. *Best Practice Food and Nutrition Manual for Aged Care Facilities*. Gosford: Australian Nursing Home and Extended Care Association; 2004.