

## Patient information

# Protected meal times

## Introduction

The protected meal time philosophy focuses not only on the quality and nutritional value of food but also the patients' experience of eating.

At West Suffolk Hospital we have introduced a protected meal time service to help patients to get the most from the food provided. The ward environment, presentation of food and the timing and content of meals are important elements in encouraging patients to eat well.

## What is a protected mealtime service?

This is a period of time over breakfast, lunch or supper when all non-urgent activity on the ward will stop. This is to prevent unnecessary interruptions to mealtimes and enable nurses, housekeepers and volunteers to be available to help serve the food and give assistance to patients who may need help. All essential and urgent care needs will still be met.

## Why is it a good idea?

Patients themselves say they would prefer to eat their meals with less distraction on the ward. Providing a protected meal time period emphasises the importance we place on mealtimes as part of the care and treatment provided for our patients. It creates a more relaxed and calm atmosphere, giving patients time to socialise and digest their food.

## What can relatives or visitors do to help?

The only people routinely on the ward during mealtimes should be nursing staff, housekeepers and volunteers.

We discourage visiting during mealtimes, therefore if you are visiting a ward displaying the protected mealtime poster, please respect this and try to visit outside the meal times.

If you normally visit at mealtimes in order to help or encourage your relative or friend to eat, we are happy for you to continue to do this. Please ask the nurse in charge how you can help.

If possible please try to avoid telephoning the ward for information during these times so the staff can concentrate on helping the patients.

If you have any questions regarding this, please speak to the nurse in charge.

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)*  
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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