



Mealttime Management Policy

Overview

This policy outlines our organisation's practices in relation to mealttime management. When assisting participants during mealttime, we are committed to providing each participant with meals that meet their individual needs and preferences. This means that we will always provide meals that are:

- Both nutritious and enjoyable
- Of appropriate texture for each participant
- Based on each participant's specific Mealttime Management Plan
- Prepared in a safe, hygienic and timely manner.



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Mealtime Management Plans

We will identify each participant that requires mealtime management and will ensure that their specific needs are assessed by appropriately qualified health practitioners. This assessment is part of the process of creating a Mealtime Management Plan that reflects the needs and preferences of each participant.

Assessment should include:

- Swallowing and nutritional needs
- Seating and positioning needs
- Environmental needs
- Appropriate meal timing and frequency
- Any medications the participant is taking and if/how this will impact their diet
- Any allergies the participant has and how this will impact their diet
- General and oral health needs.

Each participant requiring mealtime management must have a Mealtime Management Plan.

When undertaking mealtime management our organisation will ensure that:

- We work with health professionals to obtain appropriate Mealtime Management Plans, including Doctors, Speech Pathologists, Dieticians, Pharmacists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists
- Staff and Key Management Personnel always understand and adhere to the participant's specific plan
- The Mealtime Management Plans include:
 - Each participant's specific mealtime needs, including swallowing, eating and drinking.
 - Risk assessments relating to meal planning, preparation and consumption
 - Steps that must be taken if incidents occur, such as coughing or choking on food or fluids
 - The contact information of people involved in providing mealtime management, including qualified health practitioners
- Each participant requiring mealtime management is involved in assessing their needs and creating their Mealtime Management Plan and consent is obtained
- All relevant staff understand how to manage incidents related to mealtime management, including coughing or choking on food or fluids
- We review all assessments and plans annually or:
 - As often as recommended by the participant's qualified health practitioner
 - More frequently if the participant's needs change or any difficulties are observed
- Each participant that requires mealtime management can access their plan
- Staff undertaking mealtime management can access the plan of every participant they are supporting.

Food Texture

All staff must prepare foods that are accurate to the participant's Mealtime Management Plan and each meal must be of appropriate texture. Staff must consult the participants developed menu and Mealtime Management Plan and prepare the food in accordance.

Once prepared, the staff are required to ensure the following:

- Support the participant to have their meal
- Monitor the participant for any signs of coughing, gagging, difficulty chewing or trouble swallowing - if present, stop food consumption immediately
- If an incident has occurred, manage the situation in accordance with our Incident Management Policy
- Prepare an alternative meal that is more suitable for the participant



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Developing Menus

We will work with the participant to develop menus that meet their needs and preferences. When developing menus, we will always consider the following:

- Religious and cultural preferences.
- Food/drink recommendations made by an appropriately qualified health practitioner
- The contents of the participant's Mealtime Management Plan
- Any chronic or emerging health risks that may impact the participant's diet, like:
 - Swallowing difficulties
 - Anaphylaxis or other food allergies
 - Obesity or being underweight
- We will assist each participant with making informed choices about their meals by:
 - Giving the participant a variety of options and explaining these options (with the use of relevant communication aids, if required)
 - Encouraging the participant to suggest meals and beverages they would like to consume
 - Allowing the participant sufficient time to consider their options
 - Giving the participant the opportunity to ask questions about their options
 - Giving the participant the opportunity to consult their family, representatives or any other members of their support network about their options.

Food Safety & Storage

We will ensure that all our food is prepared in a safe and hygienic environment. This is important for maintaining food quality and avoiding food poisoning.

Our organisation will maintain food safety by:

- Ensuring all food preparation areas are kept clean and tidy
- Providing appropriate cooking utensils and implements
- Providing appropriate storage facilities (e.g. Fridges, freezers, pantry cupboards)
- Ensuring that all food is stored and prepared in accordance with all relevant health standards
- Undertaking regular kitchen inspections.

When preparing food, staff must:

- Always clean their hands
- Comply with our Infection Control Policy
- Ensure that each item is stored in the appropriate place, including:
 - Perishables such as meat, dairy and vegetables are refrigerated below 5 degrees
 - Dry staples, such as flour, rice and pasta are stored in a cool, dark and dry pantry cupboard
 - Frozen foods are put into a freezer and stored at – 15 degrees or cooler
- Ensure that all food and drinks can be easily identified as meals to be provided to specific participants (e.g., by labelling)
- Ensure that food and drinks to be provided to different participants are sufficiently differentiated from each other
- Follow the food preparation instructions provided by the organisation and/or the directions on the packet
- Wash up after cooking
- Avoid cross-contamination by:
 - Washing their hands after touching raw food
 - Covering raw food, including meat, and storing it separately from ready-to-eat food
 - Using different utensils, plates and chopping boards for raw and cooked food.



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Staff Responsibilities

Our organisation will ensure that all staff providing mealtime management is trained appropriately.

Training will cover:

- The specific needs and preferences of the participants staff will be supporting
- The specific skills needed to carry out every aspect of each participant's plan
- The preparation and provision of safe and enjoyable meals, including:
 - Timely meal planning and preparation
 - How to maintain a safe food consumption and preparation environment
 - Modifying foods (e.g. Food texture) in accordance with each participant's Mealtime Management Plan
- The identification, management and mitigation of emerging and chronic health risks
- Signs of common food-related complications (such as choking)
- Identifying all other people involved in managing chronic and emerging health risks, and when and how to seek help (e.g. Key Management Personnel, the participant's qualified health practitioner)
- The steps staff will need to take if safety incidents occur during meals, such as coughing or choking on food or fluids
- Storage arrangements for relevant records relating to mealtime management and how these records can be accessed.

Managing Safety Incidents

Our organisation will ensure that our participants can consume meals in a safe manner.

We will do this by:

- Undertaking risk assessments for each participant that requires mealtime management
- Adjusting our risk management data in response to changing participant needs
- Training all relevant staff to respond to different types of risks and incidents, including how to respond to emergency situations
- Managing any incidents in accordance with our incident management policies and processes.

Mealtime Management Complaints

Any complaints about any aspect of mealtime management will be addressed in accordance with our Complaints Management Policy.