



Devon Prison Cluster  
**Buddy Support  
Worker Induction  
Programme**

Prisoners assisting other prisoners



**Fluids and nutrition**

Adapted from Care Standard 8

**Buddy Support Workers should be aware of the importance of fluids and nutrition and use this knowledge to recognise any changes in an individual.**

**This role should actively support individuals with their fluid and nutrition intake.**

## To complete this module...

you will need to show that you understand the outcomes listed below. Please use this booklet as a guide but don't copy directly from this. When writing your answers in your workbook, please try to give your own examples.

### Outcomes

- Explain why it is important to make sure the person(s) you are supporting drinks enough and is encouraged to eat healthily?
- List signs and symptoms of poor nutrition and hydration.
- Explain what you would do if someone you were supporting showed any of the above signs or symptoms?

**In additional to those outcomes listed above – you will also be observed in the workplace and will need to demonstrate the below outcomes:**

- Show that you can make sure that drinks are within reach of those that have restrictions on their movement/mobility. Also, that they are refreshed on a regular basis.
- Show that you are supporting the individuals that they support to get access to food during the day and recording/reporting any concerns that they might have with individuals concerning their nutrition.

# Fluids and nutrition play a huge part in a person's wellbeing

**The below factors are important to consider:**

- It is important that eating problems are identified.
- It is important you consider the impacts that dementia can have on eating and drinking.
- You need to consider communication difficulties.
- Think about dignity issues (including ageism, racism and abuse) when supporting someone with eating and drinking.
- Choice and dietary/religious/cultural issues can impact individuals eating and drinking.
- There is an assessment tool called - 'Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool' (MUST Tool) – this is used to look at the level of risk someone has with malnutrition and then to put a plan in place to support that person. This is not a tool that you will use but you will notice changes in your service user and therefore it will be important that you know this tool is available.
- You will not undertake any intimate personal care with the individuals you support, which includes not directly feeding someone (if someone needs this level of support they will not be allocated to you for this activity).

**However you will still play an important part in supporting the individual to access food and drink.**

An important role will be supporting individuals to access food and encouraging them to eat and drink healthily and observing their ongoing health.

The following table looks at a range of reasons that people might suffer from lack of nutrition along with possible causes and suggested solutions.

Problem	Possible causes	Possible solutions / resources
<b>Poor appetite</b>	<p>Illness (e.g. cancer)</p> <p>Depression</p> <p>Mental health</p> <p>Dementia</p> <p>Side effects of medication</p> <p>Decrease in sensitivity to taste</p>	<p>Medical causes and treatments will be explored.</p> <p>Encourage people to eat by involving them in the choice and preparation, and talking about food when eating.</p> <p>Make eating a pleasant, sociable experience rather than a necessary chore</p>
<b>Lack of nutritional knowledge or cooking skills</b>	<p>Long-term lack of knowledge could have a greater impact on poor nutrition in old age.</p> <p>Widowers may not have prepared food for themselves before the loss of their spouse.</p>	<p>Raise awareness about the importance of nutrition to health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Try to introduce new skills or rekindle lost ones.</p>
<b>Dental problems</b>	<p>Ill-fitting dentures may cause discomfort when eating.</p> <p>Dentures may also cause loss of sensitivity to taste.</p>	<p>Ensure older people have access to good regular dental care.</p> <p>Offer support with cleaning and fitting dentures in preparation for meals.</p> <p><i>Offer food that is easier to eat</i></p>
<b>Poor nutrition relating to dementia</b>	<p>Nutritional problems, loss of appetite and weight loss are common problems in dementia,</p> <p>Swallowing problems become increasingly noticeable as dementia worsens.</p>	<p>The Alzheimer's Society 'Food for Thought' practice guides and advice sheets were produced specifically to help health and social care staff and carers deal with the challenges experienced by people with dementia concerning food, eating and drinking.</p> <p>Manage swallowing disorders (dysphagia) the service users will be referred healthcare to use food thickeners with appropriate posture and feeding techniques</p>
<b>Problems with eating caused by physical difficulties</b>	<p>Difficulty swallowing (dysphagia) could be related to dementia, stroke, abscesses, tumours or degenerative neuromuscular diseases.</p> <p>Physical difficulties which restrict ability to access, or eat food.</p> <p><i>Problems with digestion</i></p>	<p>Explore all possible medical causes and treatments.</p> <p>Ensure barriers to physical difficulty are removed.</p> <p>Provide aids to assist with particular problems.</p>

Problem	Possible causes	Possible solutions / resources
<b>Toileting concerns</b>	<p>Poor bladder control.</p> <p>Lack of support to go to the toilet.</p> <p>Constipation caused by ignoring or over-riding the urge to defecate due to immobility, pain or confusion poor diet, dehydration gastrointestinal disease (including cancer) drugs hypothyroidism food remaining in the gut for longer (slow transit time) poor digestive system muscle tone.</p>	<p>Medical causes and treatments will be explored.</p> <p>Ensure people drink enough fluids for good hydration.</p> <p>Encourage physical activity.</p> <p>Encourage good diet.</p>
<b>Low expectation and fear of complaining</b>	<p>Attitudes to food and eating.</p> <p>Poor levels of support.</p> <p>Poor food provision.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of good nutrition.</p> <p>Provide advocacy where needed.</p>
<b>Lack of access to good nutrition</b>	<p>Lack of appropriate food or help to eat it.</p> <p>Access to the food or special equipment needed.</p>	<p>Support dietary and cultural needs.</p> <p>Use symbols to aid communication</p> <p>Support access to food</p>
<b>Social issue</b>	<p>Before coming into prison:</p> <p>Poverty.</p> <p>People who live alone may feel that it is not worth cooking just for one person.</p> <p>In prison:</p> <p>People may be embarrassed about eating with others due to physical problems with eating.</p>	<p>Support them to access fluids and foods whilst in prison.</p> <p>Monitor them and observe any changes</p> <p>Report any concerns</p>
<b>Cultural/religious issues</b>	<p>People that adhere to strict religious diets may be wary of food served in communal places</p> <p>Don't make assumptions about people's preferences on the basis of their cultural background – people should be asked what their preferences</p>	<p>Provide advocacy where needed Person centred care</p> <p>Understanding what the person can eat</p> <p>Where necessary seek advice</p>

# Symptoms of malnutrition

The most common symptom of malnutrition is unplanned and unexplained weight loss.

If someone loses 5-10% of their body weight in the course of three to six months and are not dieting, it could be a sign that they are at risk of being malnourished.

However a person can be overweight or obese and still be malnourished. This can be the result of dietary consumption of foods and drinks which are high in fat and sugar but low in vitamins and minerals.

Sometimes weight loss is not obvious, as it occurs slowly over time. You may notice that someone's clothes, belts and jewellery gradually feel looser.

## Other signs of malnutrition may include:

- feeling tired all the time and lacking energy
- taking a long time to recover from infections
- delayed wound healing
- irritability
- poor concentration
- finding it hard to keep warm
- persistent diarrhoea
- depression

## Vitamin and mineral deficiency

Physical signs that someone may have a vitamin or mineral deficiency include:

- skin problems or rashes
- swelling of your tongue
- poor vision at night or in dim light
- feeling out of breath and tired all the time
- pain in your bones and joints

Your role will include observing any changes in a person's condition and reporting this, making sure that they have access to the food that is provided by the prison.

There are many reasons why an individual may experience malnutrition prior to coming into prison. Whilst they are in prison you can support them to build up their nutrition and fluid to support their wellbeing.

In prison individuals may have difficulty in collecting their food and so may skip meals. There may be other reasons such as suffering from depression or have an eating disorder so you can support them by letting the wing officer/healthcare know as soon as possible.

# Fluids

Extracted from **The Mail Online**:

## **How hundreds of patients are dying of thirst in hospital:**

**The story of a 22-year-old who died in hospital from dehydration shocked Britain. But his tragedy is horrifyingly common...**

The 22-year-old had been admitted to one of the UK's top teaching hospitals for hip replacement surgery, but within three days he'd died of thirst, after medical staff ignored both his pleas for water and the symptoms of dehydration that experts say are 'easy to recognise'.

When Kane, in desperation, rang 999 on his mobile, a policeman who responded to his call witnessed him shouting repeatedly to the nursing staff: 'Can I have some water?'

Worryingly, Kane's tragic death is an extreme example of a far more widespread problem: patients simply aren't getting enough water.

'We're all aware of the importance of drinking plenty of water, as it's essential to digestion, absorption of nutrients and the elimination of toxins and wastes,' says dietician Rick Wilson of the British Dietetic Association. 'Yet healthcare staffs too often ignore the huge importance of hydration for hospital patients.'

**Without water, even a healthy person's body starts to feel the effects within hours, especially in hot weather.**

## What does water do for you?

### Water...

Is needed by the brain to manufacture hormones and neurotransmitters

Forms saliva (digestion)

Keeps mucosal membranes moist

Regulates body temperature (sweating and respiration)

Allows body cells to grow, reproduce and survive

Acts as a shock absorber for brain and spinal

cord Flushes body waste, mainly in urine

Converts food to components needed for survival

(digestion) Lubricates joints Helps deliver oxygen all over the body

Is the major component of most body parts

### Percentages

In adult men, about 60% of their bodies are

water The brain and heart are composed of 73%

water The lungs are about 83% water

The skin contains 64% water

Muscles and kidneys are 79%

Even the bones are watery:

31%

You need water to regulate body temperature and to provide the means for nutrients to travel to your organs and tissues. Water also helps transport oxygen to your cells, removes waste and protects your joints and organs.

Water is vital to life and there is increasing evidence of the benefits of good hydration in the promotion of health and wellbeing in older people. The evidence suggests that good hydration can help prevent falls, constipation, pressure sores, kidney stones, blood pressure problems and headaches (Ellins, 2006).

Furthermore, poor hydration has been shown to contribute to obesity, depression, inactivity and fatigue and to prolong healing and recovery (Ellins, 2006).

# Dehydration

Dehydration occurs when you lose more water than you take in. You lose water through urination, respiration, and by sweating, and you lose more water when you're active than when you're sedentary.

Diuretics, such as caffeine pills, certain medications and alcohol may increase the amount of water your body loses. Lost fluids must be replaced by the fluids in the foods you eat and the beverages you drink.

Symptoms of mild dehydration include thirst, pains in joints and muscles, headaches and constipation. A strong odour to your urine, along with a yellow or amber colour, may also indicate dehydration.

## How much water do I need?

The foods you eat supply about 20 percent of the water you need. The rest comes from the beverages you drink. Encourage older people to drink regularly throughout the day. The Food Standards Agency recommends a daily intake of six to eight glasses of water or other fluids. (Food Standards Agency, 2008).

## What can you do in your role as Buddy Support Worker?

- Make sure that you understand the importance of getting enough fluids and nutrition and what the signs and symptoms are if you do not get enough.
- The Prison service will ensure the right types of food are available for all prisoners, but your role will be to make sure that the individuals which you are supporting have access to this food – which might include supporting them to collect meals or if they are unable to do this, collect them on behalf of the individual.
- An important part of your role is to monitor the individual and if you observe any changes in them, report this to your Wing Officer and record this so that it can be reported to health care and investigated further.
- You can make sure that the individual is drinking enough fluids and that they can reach the drinks in their cell – also to check that they have access to fresh drinking water.
- It might be that they need some special equipment to support them to as independent as possible. You can help with this by monitoring any changes in the individual and reporting it – they might need an assessment for some additional equipment.
- Make sure you remember person-centred care – can the person communicate their needs to you? Can they eat with dignity? Are you providing active support? Are you monitoring the individual observing any changes in their behaviour?

### References:

USGS Water science school; NHS guidance; Social Care in Excellence; Mail online.