

Dementia and Maintaining a Healthy Diet

Eating a healthy and balanced diet is important for all of us. Not eating enough increases the risk of dehydration, weight loss, urinary tract infection and constipation. These health problems can be particularly problematic for someone with Dementia as they increase confusion and the risks of delirium and can sometimes make the symptoms of Dementia worse. (Dementia UK 2019)

There are many reasons why people with Dementia may experience problems with eating and drinking and it is useful to find the reasons in order to work out how to help. Their taste or appetite may have changed; they may not recognise foods or know how to prepare them or they simply may forget to eat.

Ensuring that someone with Dementia is eating a healthy diet can be a huge challenge for carers but here are a few ideas that we have found helpful.

1. Involve the person; ask what they would like to eat. Offer a simple choice and get them to help with food prep as appropriate.
2. Use plain plates so that the food is more easily visible; make the plate of food colourful and interesting but not over full.
3. Encourage to eat little and often throughout the day offering small portions rather than a large meal.
4. If using utensils is difficult prepare more finger foods. Picnic style foods are good and nuts, berries etc. are great sources of nutrition and energy and feel like treat.
5. Eating should be a sociable pastime. Eat together when you can. Sit directly opposite each other, smile, and eat first to encourage the person with Dementia to copy.
6. Praise the food! Saying "It's delicious" may pique interest in tasting the meal
7. People with Dementia are easily distracted and need help to focus on their meal. Make sure the room is quiet and calm. Small comments about the food are good but do not chatter too much.
8. Be flexible: people with Dementia often develop a sweet tooth. They might like to eat their dessert first. Sweet condiments like ketchup or apple sauce can be added to savoury food
9. Most importantly, be patient!

If you need any help or guidance, want to find out about other activities and services, or just need someone to talk to who understands your situation, Dementia Friendly Keighley is here for you.

You can call us on **07452 773788** between **10am and 2pm daily**, text (**SMS**) or **WhatsApp 'CALL BACK'** on the same number or leave a message outside of these hours and we will call back as soon as possible. Please note: Times and days of our activities and services are subject to change, so please call for up to date information.

