



THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

The Professional Association for Registered Dietitians
5th Floor, Charles House, 148/9 Great Charles Street Queensway, Birmingham B3 3HT
Tel: 0121 200 8080 Fax: 0121 200 8081



M e d i a R e l e a s e

Embargoed until 00.01
Thursday 9th February 2006

Eating Together is Important for Elderly Patients

What you eat is important, but busy hospital wards may not be conducive to meal enjoyment. Researchers have just published a study in the February issue of *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* showing that patients were likely to eat less from meals served bedside, than meals served in a dining room. "How much you eat, is influenced by where you eat it" says lead researcher, dietitian Lucy Wright.

The researchers looked at hospital in-patients, with an average age of over 80 years. Older people in hospital often have poor appetites, and benefit from eating more. In the study, as many patients as were able from one ward had lunch in a dining room. Patients from another ward acted as controls, and ate only from trays by their bedside. Meals were selected from the same menu from foods prepared in the same kitchen.

Food intake data were collected for 48 patients over six weeks. The researchers found that the dining group consumed an average of 490 kcals for lunch, an impressive 130 kcals more each than the 360 consumed on average when meals were served bedside. There was a trend towards a greater number of people gaining weight in the dining room group than in the control group, although group weight differences were not statistically significant.

Improved intakes of foods in a vulnerable patient group on an acute elderly medicine ward are welcome; the detrimental effects of poor nutritional status on patients' rehabilitation, length of stay and chances of complications has been well documented. Eating enough food is preferable to the use of supplement drinks often used to boost nutrient and energy intakes in patients with poor appetites. Adequate intakes of nutritious foods are an important part of rehabilitation and recovery from illness, and eating in the social environment of a dining room, appears to support eating more.

- Ends -

Notes

1. Reference: Eating together is important: using a dining room in an acute elderly medical ward increases energy intake. L Wright, M Hickson & G Frost. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* (2006) 19, pp1-4.
2. Contact researcher: Lucy Wright, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Hammersmith Hospital NHS Trust, Charing Cross Hospital, London. Tel 020 8846 1445 E-mail: lwright@hhnt.nhs.uk
3. Media enquires to the British Dietetic Association should be directed to Dr Frankie Phillips 0870 850 2517; email: pr@bda.uk.com
4. The British Dietetic Association founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professional with over 5000 members. About two-thirds of members are employed in the National Health Service. The remaining members work in education, industry, research, sport settings or freelance. Registered dietitians held the only legally recognised graduate qualification in nutrition and dietetics. They are experts in interpreting and translating the science of nutrition into practical ways of promoting nutritional well-being, disease treatment and the prevention of nutrition-related problems. Their advice is sound and based on current scientific evidence. Registration, awarded by the Health Professions Council, is an indication that a dietitian is fit to practise and is working within an agreed statement of conduct.
5. For further details about the British Dietetic Association, please visit our website: www.bda.com Also, see our Weight Wise website with some great information put together by registered dietitians specifically for consumers at: www.bda.org.uk/weightwise