Eating well with dementia

It is important for people with dementia to eat well. People with dementia often have trouble with eating, but there are some ways we can help.

People’s appetite may change when they have dementia. Sometimes they may eat more than before, while others may forget to eat or start to have difficulty chewing and swallowing. If someone you care for has trouble with eating, or is losing weight, it is a good idea to talk to the doctor.

Hints for mealtimes:

* Give the person plenty of time to eat, and avoid distractions like radio and TV.
* Give prompts to the person – place cutlery in their hands and encourage them with their eating.
* Serve one course at a time, and keep the table clear to help the person focus on their meal.
* Use plain coloured plates to make the food stand out. Patterns can be confusing and white plates can make it hard for people to recognise some foods like potato, fish and cauliflower.
* People with dementia have changes in food likes and dislikes. Try cooking new dishes, and be aware that the person may have odd preferences (like a mix of sweet and savoury flavours together).
* Serve meals and snacks at regular times, and help them eat with others as much as possible.
* If spilling food or drinks is a problem, ask a community nurse or occupational therapist for help with different cutlery or cups.

*Updated September 2017*