

# Medical Eating Program Nutrition Intervention



The Medical Eating Program Nutrition Intervention is used for patients who have not been able to eat and drink enough because of their eating disorder. This program is designed to reduce worry and anxiety about food and eating while making sure that your child gets the energy (calories) and nutrients they need to start getting healthy.

## What will my child be given to eat and drink?

Our goal is to help your child eat many different foods that provide enough energy (calories) and nutrients to help improve their health and medical status.

Important things to know about meals and snacks:

- Your child will get well-balanced meals and snacks based on a plan that meets their health needs.
- Breakfast, lunch, dinner and 2 to 3 snacks will be served to your child daily to help set an eating pattern that is appropriate for their age.
- Your child will have 30 minutes to eat meals, and 15 minutes to eat snacks.
- To help your child get all the energy and nutrients they need, they will need to finish all meals and snacks.
- As part of this program, a dietitian will plan your child's meals and snacks so you and your child do not need to worry about choosing the right food or amounts.
- The dietitian will meet with you to learn about family religious or cultural practices and any lifelong food dislikes your child may have.
- Your child will be provided with the amount of fluids they need as part of each meal and snack.
- You may not provide additional food or drinks.

Please talk with the dietitian if you would like more information.

## What if my child does not finish a meal or snack?

Food is your child's medicine and they need to finish 100% of all food and drinks that are served, including condiments. If your child does not finish a meal or snack, we will give them a liquid nutrition supplement to replace what they did not finish. They will be given 15 minutes to drink the supplement.

## What if my child does not drink the nutrition supplement?

We understand that finishing meals and snacks will likely be the hardest part of the hospital stay for your child but is also the most important. If your child is not able to finish their food or the liquid nutrition supplement, the nurse will need to place a nasogastric (NG) tube to help them. An NG tube is a long, very thin and flexible tube that is inserted into the nose and ends in the stomach. It is used

## Department of Nutrition

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to feed a patient liquid nutrition. If your child is not able to finish the liquid nutrition supplement, the NG tube will be placed to help them get this very important nutrition. Even after an NG tube is placed, we will encourage your child to complete every meal and snack by mouth.

If an NG tube is placed, it will remain in place until your child has not needed to use it for 24 hours. In other words, the NG tube will be removed when your child has eaten all of their meals and snacks, or drank all of the liquid nutrition supplement, for 24 hours.

### What if my child is on a vegetarian or vegan diet?

We are not able to meet this dietary request. During nutritional restoration, your child's energy (caloric) and nutrient needs are very high, and their bodies will not be able to tolerate the volume of food needed with a vegetarian or vegan diet. Exceptions can be made for lifelong practices of vegetarian or vegan diets. Please tell the dietitian about any family religious or cultural practices.

### What should I do when my child is eating a meal or snack?

You are a big part of your child's treatment plan and recovery. You should plan to be present during meals and snacks as often as possible, and if you can, have a meal or snack with your child. To best support your child while they are eating, practice the **4C's of Meal Support**.

- 1) Remain **Calm**. If you feel nervous or scared, your child will pick up on your fear and it may make them more nervous too.
- 2) Be **Confident**. The more confident you appear, the more relaxed and safer your child will feel.
- 3) Be **Consistent**. Follow the treatment plan exactly and don't negotiate.
- 4) Be **Compassionate**. Understand that your child is doing something that is very difficult for them.

Offering support during meals can help your child feel less worried and be more likely to finish their tray.

### What happens with meals when we go home?

During your child's stay, the dietitian will meet with you to talk about recommendations that will meet your child's needs. Your child's nutritional needs at home will be similar to what they have been eating in the hospital. We will recommend that you follow a similar nutritional plan at home including:

- Prioritize regular meals and snacks
- Give support at meals and snacks
- Provide a variety of foods
- Provide balanced meals
- Provide enough energy (calories) to meet weight gain goals

\*Your dietitian will review a specific plan, so you feel comfortable providing the right amounts and variety.