



March 14th, 2016

Food for thought for good health

A new initiative to protect patients from malnutrition is being launched at South Tyneside District Hospital this week - Nutrition and Hydration Week (March 14th to 20th).

It is being introduced by the Dietetics team on one of the elderly care wards and, if successful, could be rolled out to all wards. The aim is to help nursing staff directly caring for patients to identify those who are undernourished and at risk of malnutrition so they can ensure they receive a high energy, high protein diet and additional snacks, and that they encourage them to have nourishing drinks during their hospital stay.

Debra Stephen, Strategic Lead, Safer Care, said: "Improved nutrition and hydration have a big impact on physical and mental well-being so it is very important that we provide extra support to patients at risk of malnutrition. The condition affects over three million people in the UK, increasing the number of hospital admissions and the length of stay, and it is estimated that it costs the health and social care economy £19 billion a year.

"There are a number of reasons why people, particularly as they get older, can become malnourished: these include difficulty eating and swallowing, an inability to absorb nutrients, depression or isolation and lessening of taste sensitivity as people get older, making eating less pleasurable."

Also during Nutrition and Hydration Week, dietetic assistants Jenna Murray and Lauren McDowell and student dietitian Hannah Faugno, along with speech and language therapist colleagues from South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust, are taking the opportunity to emphasise the need for good nutritional intake and hydration not only for patients but also for the wider community. The healthcare professionals are manning a stand near the main entrance of the District Hospital to raise awareness among staff and the general public about malnutrition and dehydration and how to prevent and manage these conditions.

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Pictured above: Staff from the Dietetics and Speech and Language Therapy teams

Issued on behalf of South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust by Kay Jordan

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