



**melbourne
dietetic
centre**

Nutrition Matters

December 2008

Welcome

Welcome to the December issue of Nutrition Matters, a quarterly newsletter produced by Melbourne Dietetic Centre for nursing homes, to support optimal nutrition practices in Aged Care.

The professional dietitians at Melbourne Dietetic Centre compile the dietetic insights offered in this newsletter. In this issue we examine dehydration and the importance of the dietitian to ensure adequate nutrition is achieved.



About MDC

Melbourne Dietetic Centre is the largest private practice of professional dietitians in Victoria. MDC has provided professional and accredited Dietetic Services to aged care facilities since 1982, and are leaders in this area of Dietetics. We currently service several thousand aged care beds in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Our team of 12 professional dietitians share a strong commitment to providing dietetic services that are of an exceptionally high professional standard. Our commitment to aged care customers is to ensure Best Cur-

rent Practice for residents, and to provide leadership for continuous quality improvement.



Inside this issue:

- I'll drink to that 2
- "Nursing Homes in the news" 2
- Meet the Team 3

I'll drink to that!



Nutrition Matters

With summer upon us, the importance of ensuring patients and residents are adequately hydrated intensifies as exposure to hot temperatures increases the likelihood of dehydration. An inadequate fluid intake results in dehydration, which can impact on quality of life through increasing the risk of falls, illness, hospitalization, pressure sore development and urinary tract infections. Approximately 10% of older people admitted to hospitals suffer from clinical dehydration and a fluid loss of 20% can even be fatal.

Early identification of dehydration can prevent serious health complications. The physical symptoms of dehydration that care staff should look for are:

- Headache
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Postural hypertension
- Concentrated, dark, strong smelling urine
- Cracked lips, dry mouth and tongue
- Constipation
- Unpleasant taste in mouth

Most adults require at least 8 glasses of fluid each day and some effective strategies that can be easily implemented to assist patients and residents in keeping hydrated include:

- Regularly including high fluid foods, such as jelly desserts, ice cream, icy poles, pureed fruit, soup and custards on the menu
- Giving medications with a full cup of fluid
- Leaving a jug of fluids at the bedside
- Where possible, revising medications that might contribute to dehydration
- Requesting speech pathology assessment for swallowing problems where appropriate
- Identifying residents at high risk, recording their fluid intake and observing for signs of dehydration
- Providing cordial as an alternative to water as some residents may not enjoy the taste of plain water
- Incorporating drink breaks as part of all activities and lifestyle programs



- Assigning a staff member as responsible for making regular 'hydration' rounds, encouraging residents to drink between meals
- Using larger, but easy-to-handle cups and glasses

Those living in aged care facilities require staff assistance to meet their fluid requirements, and the provision of adequate fluids must be **made a priority** to minimise the risk of dehydration. Small efforts made by care staff on a daily basis such as offering extra drinks between meals can be enough to prevent dehydration and any related detrimental health outcomes, including hospitalisation. Patients or residents at risk of dehydration should be identified, and their fluid intake encouraged and carefully monitored to ensure its adequacy.

Assessors visiting facilities look for evidence that the staff and symptoms in place at the facility support residents in maintaining their hydration status. It is important that facilities can demonstrate that fluid intake monitoring records are used and that residents have access and are referred to speech pathology and dietitian services when necessary. If your facility has a high incidence of dehydration, a **Melbourne Dietetic Centre** dietitian can help you **create a tailored dehydration prevention strategy** to ensure hydration standards are met.

"Nursing Homes in the News"

"The Australian Government is undertaking a record 7000 visits by the Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency to the nation's nursing homes to ensure quality of care, including nutrition and hydration" - Federal Minister for Ageing Justine Elliot.

As aged care experts, Melbourne Dietetic Centre has many suitable assessment and management tools and systems to ensure nutrition and hydration standards in your facility are of the highest standard.





**melbourne
dietetic
centre**

Melbourne Dietetic Centre

47 Whitehorse Road
Balwyn VIC 3103

Phone: (03) 9817 1544
Fax: (03) 9817 1582
E-mail: admin@mdc.id.au

As Melbourne's largest group of private practice dietitians we are proudly full time private practitioners, offering a wider variety of skills and expertise and geographic access and availability.

For further information visit

www.dietitianscentre.com.au

or phone (03) 9817 1544

you can now also view

Nutrition Matters on our website

Meet the Team

Nicki is an accredited practicing dietitian having graduated from Deakin University with a Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics.

She enjoys working in the aged care setting, helping older individuals achieve their optimal health status. Having spent some time providing nutritional assistance at an AFL Football Club during the 2007 season, she is interested in sports nutrition as well as weight management, diabetes, food intolerances and general healthy eating.

On the weekends Nicki likes to head to the beach in

the warmer months, and watch the Hawks win during the cooler months.



Nicki Dobney

Disclaimer: Information provided in this newsletter is intended to be used as supplementary to, and not as a substitute for formal training in patient care and nutrition and hydration practises. Please call (03) 9817 1544 if you do not wish to receive further newsletters from MDC.