

## Introducing the *ACI Nutrition Standards for Consumers of Inpatient Mental Health Services in NSW*

Good nutrition is a vital part of life and health. Providing nutritious food is an important part of caring for people in mental health inpatient facilities that requires a collaborative approach from everyone involved in the recovery process.

Nutrition standards guide inpatient mental health services to plan menus and offer meals that meet people's needs, while also providing people with the opportunity to choose and enjoy the food they eat.

People who access inpatient mental health services tell us that they like food that is tasty, appealing, healthy and nutritious and a menu that offers variety and choice.

The *Nutrition Standards for Consumer of Inpatient Mental Health Services in NSW* are based on evidence of the nutrition requirements for people with mental illness and were influenced by the

opinions of consumers and staff. The Standards support the NSW Health policy directives for Nutrition Care and Physical Health Care within Mental Health Services.

These Standards apply to all situations where food is provided to people admitted to mental health facilities. This includes not only main meals and mid-meals but also special occasions such as BBQs, rehabilitation cooking programs, food prepared in activity of daily living kitchens, lunch packs for those on day leave, and independent living situations.

The Standards were developed recognising that people accessing inpatient mental health services have needs that differ to those of the general hospital population. People with mental illness are at significantly higher risk from chronic disease, particularly cardiovascular disease, which results in a reduced life expectancy.

Good nutrition is fundamental to improving the physical health of people with mental illness.

**Good Nutrition  
supports recovery,  
helps people attain good physical and mental health,  
meets consumer needs and expectations, and  
meets food and nutrition requirements.**



### The key principles of the Nutrition Standards are:

- All people have access to nutritious, safe, appetising and high quality foods and fluids in adequate quantities
- The menu offers variety and food choices that are appetising, tasty and appealing, taking into account the length of stay and a priority goal of normalising eating
- Individual needs are met in relation to
  - nutrition and medical needs
  - the social, cultural, religious and emotional aspects of eating
- There is consistency with current nutrition and health promotion guidelines e.g. the Australian Dietary Guidelines.

### What are the nutrition standards?

The Standards build on the existing *Nutrition Standards for Adult Inpatients in NSW Hospitals* and contain:

- Nutrient goals: the amount of energy and key nutrients that the standard menu must provide
  - For example: 8000kJ per day, 90g protein per day, 30g of fibre per day
  - There are limits to the energy content of main menu items and mid-meal snacks
- Minimum menu choices: the minimum number of food choices and minimum serve sizes for each of the 3-4 main meals and 2-3 mid meals. This means the menu should offer
  - Different choices at main meals – hot dishes, salads and sandwiches
  - At least 3 serves of fruit per day and 2 different vegetables with a hot meal
  - At least 1 low glycaemic index food per meal
  - High fibre breakfast cereals and breads
  - At least 1 protein food at breakfast (e.g. egg, yoghurt, baked beans)
  - Lower energy desserts at least once per day
  - Hot beverages at least 4 times per day (advice on caffeinated beverages is included)

### How were they developed?

Professor Peter Williams developed the Standards under the guidance of the multidisciplinary ACI Nutrition and Mental Health Working Group. This group

- Conducted an extensive literature review of nutrition and mental health.
- Reviewed the profile of people accessing inpatient mental health facilities in NSW.
- Sought feedback from consumers and staff of inpatient mental health facilities about what they wanted and expected in relation to food and meal services. This was achieved through working with the Official Visitors Program.

Feedback on the structure and content of the Standards was sought from the Mental Health Commission of NSW, the NSW Ministry of Health, the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office, Local Health Districts and Specialty Networks, HealthShare NSW, Professional bodies (such as the Dietitians Association of Australia), the NSW Consumer Advisory Group – Mental Health, and the Official Visitors Program.

### Implementation

Implementation of these Standards requires input from all key stakeholders including facility managers, clinicians (dietitians, speech pathology, occupational therapy, nursing, medical staff), food service providers, people with lived experience of admission to mental health inpatient facilities, the families and carers and peer workers.

### More details

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