



3 Actions ▶ to Improve Outcomes in Memory Care

With dementia cases on the rise, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is focusing on quality of care and outcomes in dementia (or “memory care”), linking these to reimbursement.

Senior living and healthcare providers need to optimize their dining environments and their food and nutrition services to improve the well-being of memory care residents and patients.

Here are three things you can do today to improve outcomes and protect your financial bottom line:

1 ▶ Customize food preparation and presentation.

Dementia often causes problems with nutrition, such as poor appetite, inability to recognize foods, overeating and the loss of smell or taste. These issues can result in poor nutrition and negative outcomes such as weight loss, delayed wound healing, infections, muscle weakness and risk for falls¹— all factors affecting reimbursements.

TO DO

- Know the food preferences of those with dementia.
- Offer culturally-familiar meal options.
- Provide choices, but limit appropriately.
- Serve small, frequent meals.
- Use texture modification, such as pureeing food or providing finger foods.
- Provide easy, on-the-go snack options for residents who tend to wander.
- Use fortified foods and nutrition supplements when indicated.

¹https://www.alz.org/facts/downloads/facts_figures_2015.pdf

2 ▶ Optimize the dining environment.

A nurturing environment helps individuals with dementia overcome obstacles to proper nutrition. These simple changes can improve eating habits and improve quality of life.

TO DO

- Remove clutter from the dining room; use simple, sturdy tables and chairs.
- Limit distractions such as ambient noises and active music.
- Optimize lighting to ensure that food can be identified.
- Create a calm space that allows dining with dignity and appropriate social interaction.
- Consider aroma therapy to stimulate appetite and soothe diners.
- Offer family-style meals and have the care-giver eat with the resident/patient.
- Promote self-feeding with visually contrasting dishes, adaptive equipment and verbal prompts.
- Provide personal assistance when necessary.

3 ▶ Transition of care: cooperate to improve outcomes.

When individuals with dementia transition from one care setting to another, it is critical to coordinate and share comprehensive nutrition plans, including nutrition. This will help improve outcomes, reduce hospital admissions and maximize reimbursements.

TO DO

- Nutrition and meal planning should be coordinated between the hospital and post-acute care communities, upon admission and discharge
- Caregivers at every touchpoint should be educated on the critical importance of proper nutrition, and the strategies to encourage adequate intake for those with dementia
- Discharge planning should include steps to ensure those with dementia have access to regular, well-balanced meals
- To reduce the risk of hospital readmission, patients with dementia that are returning home should receive follow-up checks to ensure proper nutrition.

Your Gordon Food Service® Customer Development Specialist can help you optimize menus and dining environments to help residents and patients requiring memory care.