



Lunch Club Hints and Tips



Helping older people — to Eat Well

Eating lunch with others is something we all do. Lunch clubs that bring people together to do this have been around a long time and those targeted at older people provide a key piece in the jigsaw of services that support older people living in their own homes to eat well. This guide will provide you with information on the different types of lunch clubs available. It will also provide hints and tips on how to maximise your lunch club and support older people.

There are four essential elements to a lunch club:
**People, Food, Venue,
Staff/Volunteers.**

The dictionary definition suggests there are two main models of lunch clubs - a social welfare model predominantly aimed at older people and a 'shared interest' model where groups of people get together to network. In fact, an internet search throws up a whole range of models, however the basic model is the same: There is the opportunity to have a meal, often affordably priced, outside of the home and the opportunity to meet with others in a social setting. For older people living on their own both can be equally important.

There are lunch clubs in communities in every corner of Scotland and the world. The different ways they operate reflects the rich diversity of different communities and the resources available. It also reflects the enormous volunteer contribution, most often by older people themselves, who give their time and talents to support friends and neighbours.

When asked what they enjoy about attending their lunch club, older people tend to talk about two main things - the food and the company.

“The
opportunity
to meet with
others”

“I could be in
the house all
week and not
see a soul”

“It’s for the
companionship
as well as the
novelty”

“An affordable
nutritious meal”



Lunch Club Models

Local Authority

The local authority identifies the need for a lunch club in or for a particular community, often for the more vulnerable older adults from a health and social care referral. It will usually take place in a community centre/community hall or a local day centre. The food is provided by the local authority, either cooked on the premises, or delivered from a local school. Transport is usually provided for people to attend the lunch club, dropping them home afterwards and staff will look after people while they are at the club. People attending will usually pay a charge, with the local authority covering staff and transport costs. This model, once widespread across the country, is now less common given the financial constraints local authorities are working with. However, some local authorities provide funding directly to the third sector to run similar models.

Benview Lunch Club Dumbarton

Funded by the local authority, this lunch club provides lunch and other services e.g. transport, bathing and befriending to vulnerable older adults on a referral basis, though people can self-refer. It has one paid coordinator with 3 staff from Community Job Scotland and volunteers

Voluntary/Community Organisation

A voluntary or community organisation supports the operation of a lunch club in a particular area. This may be a national voluntary organisation such as the RVS (Royal Voluntary Service) or a local organisation that provides a lunch club as part of its wider work. Local churches and faith groups often operate this model. Housing associations also sometimes offer lunch clubs in their sheltered housing schemes. These clubs are often run in partnership with the local authority which may provide resources such as a venue, funding, transport and/or meals. The voluntary/community organisation provides staff time to do the day to day management and running of the club. This is often a mix of paid staff and volunteers

Community Run

These are local groups constituted primarily to provide a lunch club. They have often been set up in response to needs identified by the local community or other organisations working in the area. They will typically have had some start-up support in terms of funding for equipment, covering initial costs e.g. hall hire, insurance, becoming a constituted organisation and may have ongoing low-level support from public health/local council.

They are planned and managed by a committee of local people and the day to day running will be carried out by volunteers. Some may have funds for a paid member of staff in the form of a cook, a development worker or activity coordinator. Transport to and from lunch clubs are often provided by volunteer drivers and/or community transport.

Community of Interest

Lunch clubs often cater for the needs of a specific group of older people. Such as ethnic minorities/gender/dementia and cater for cultural and religious requirements. Lunch clubs can be important places where older people from minority ethnic communities can get together, share food and meet others from a shared cultural background. They are often part of a wider service to older people provided by a voluntary or community organisation and may receive some support from the local authority. Clubs will usually supply and prepare their own food. Often members will be drawn from a wider geographical area.

Community Cafés

Community cafés, usually a form of social enterprise often provide a lunchtime service providing affordable meals to all. Some extend this to running a lunch club or providing food for a lunch club which another organisation runs in their premises. This model can be a 'win-win' for cafes to generate income and customers and older people can have their lunch in a 'normal café atmosphere' with potentially more menu choices. If the café has the Healthy Living Award (pictured), then people will know they can get healthier options as well.



Private Sector

The private sector plays a role in providing lunch clubs especially in rural areas where meeting facilities may be limited. Clubs meet in a local restaurant or pub which provides a meal at an agreed price. Meals are often pre-ordered by lunch club members and paid for on the day. Lunch clubs in pubs have been developed in some parts of the country to specifically appeal to older adults, topics of interest (e.g. craft group, walking group). Some private caterers may supply the food for lunch clubs.

Oxgangs Neighbourhood Centre

The lunch club is an integral part of the activities offered to the local community. Dom, the Centre Manager, said "The lunch club plays a vital role in addressing issues such as social isolation. It is run by a dedicated team of volunteers and healthy meals are cooked by our skilled Café Manager, Bryony. We are currently putting together an exciting programme for the lunch club which will include, games, talks, music, film and many other things to sit alongside our commitment to healthy eating."



Lunch Club Hints and Tips

Access

Ideally your lunch club should be held somewhere that is wheelchair accessible and easy to access e.g. few stairs/situated on the ground floor. Try to keep walkways and the room clear of clutter to avoid any unnecessary obstacles.

Offer the choice to any guests using a wheelchair to be transferred to a chair wherever possible to allow them the same experience as everyone else.

Allow plenty time for people to arrive and get comfortable before food and drinks are served. It's a good idea to pull chairs out beforehand so that

guests can easily sit down upon arrival and offer support if anyone has difficulty moving or adjusting their seat.

A good seat is everything! They should be sturdy with armrests.

Atmosphere

A nice relaxed atmosphere can help encourage eating, drinking and socialising amongst guests. Playing some background music and avoiding loud noise or distractions can help relax guests. A bright, inviting environment will help guests see what food is being served and encourage

them to eat. Check that the lighting is suitable in the room in case visibility is poor.

Decorating a room with light, bright colours and flowers can help add to the ambiance of the lunch club and make it look inviting. Tablecloths and napkins are just simple ways to help set the scene as well as being helpful for any spillages!

This may be the only source of socialising for some older people so friendliness and enthusiasm will go a long way. A supportive, and helpful approach will not only encourage eating and drinking, but also help improve mood and well-being.

A temperature of 20-25°C is best but extra heating or air-conditioning may be necessary in winter and summer.

The Meal

Ensure crockery is lightweight and easy to hold.

Metal cutlery and serrated knives are better than plastic for grip and to aid with cutting up food so try to avoid disposable cutlery where possible.

Sturdy cups with handles will help older people to easily grasp and lift them without spillage. Cups should not be made too full as this may cause problems when lifting or if someone is frail/has a tremor.

Check for any dietary requirements ahead of time and be aware of any food allergies that guests may have. Special diets may be required for religious and cultural groups. For further information see **Equality Scotland's Healthy Diet & Lifestyle** for ethnic minority older people.

When making your menus, aim to create balanced, nutritious meals for your guests to enjoy. Older people should be encouraged to eat more fresh vegetables, fruit, protein and wholegrain cereals. For more information on a balanced diet see the Eatwell Guide on page 8, or our **Eat Well – A Guide for Older People in Scotland** booklet..

Menu options should be made available in advance wherever possible with a variety of dishes on offer. Menus with photographs can be especially helpful to help guests choose a dish they would like to eat.

Those with swallowing difficulties may have been prescribed a textured modified diet e.g. soft diet.



Food must always be served at the right temperature. If there are several courses on the menu then serve dishes at timely intervals rather than all at once.

Our senses play a big part in enjoying our food. Consider how the meal smells and if it looks appealing on the plate.

Large portions can sometimes be off-putting for older people. Smaller meals may be more appropriate with the offer of second helpings made available.

Allow plenty time for guests to enjoy their meals at their own pace. Some guests may be slower eaters or have eating difficulties which means they need longer to chew and swallow food.



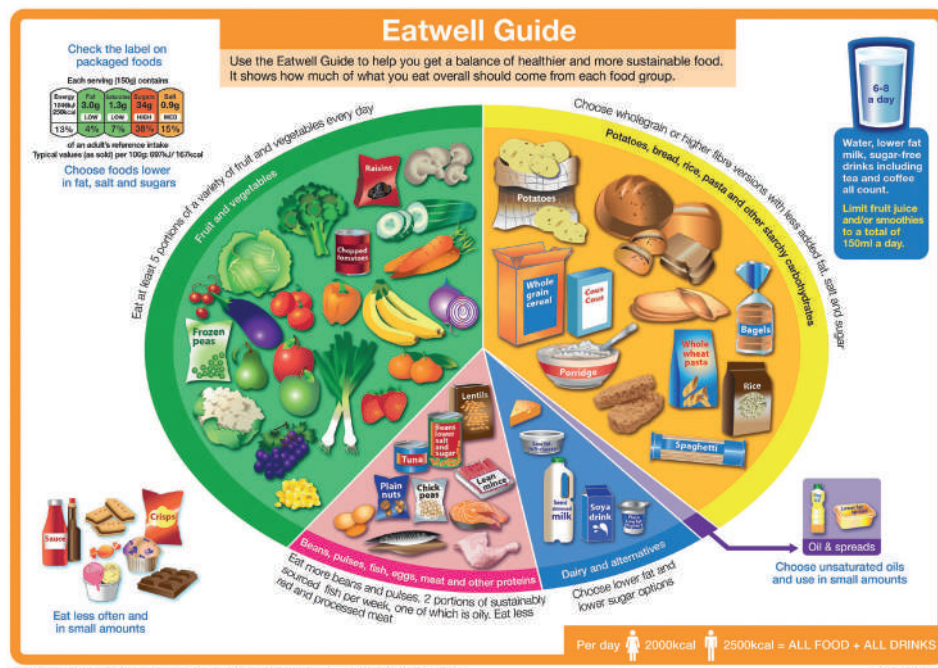
Hydration

Older people have an increased risk of dehydration due to reduced thirst sensation. Aim for 6-8 glasses of fluid a day. All drinks count towards fluid intake except alcohol.

A range of hot and cold drinks should always be available. Adding jugs of water or juice to tables can encourage people to take regular drinks and reduces the risk of dehydration.

Signs and Symptoms of Dehydration

- Confusion
- UTIs
- Increased risk of falls
- Weakness
- Pressure Sores
- Constipation
- Nausea
- Irritability
- Dizziness
- Headache

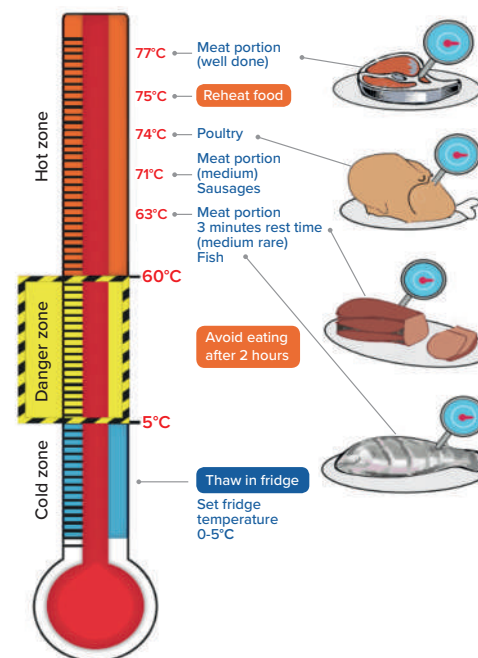


Older people may struggle to drink enough every day. Including water-rich foods in the diet can help keep someone hydrated. Soups, stews, yoghurts, jelly and custard can increase fluid intake and will add variety to their diet. Fruit and vegetables are a great source of water which will not only keep someone hydrated but help them meet their 5-a-day too!

Food Hygiene

Good personal hygiene is very important e.g. regularly washing hands, particularly after handling waste or visiting the bathroom. Older people are more vulnerable to food borne illness and the effects are much more severe.

See the guide below for the correct temperatures to cook and store food.



For more information about food hygiene go to Food Standards Scotland
www.foodstandards.gov.scot



Malnutrition

Malnutrition occurs when a person's diet does not meet their nutritional needs. Malnutrition is a significant problem for older adults. It is estimated that 1 in 10 older people living in the community are suffering from or at risk of malnutrition.

Signs and Symptoms

- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Clothes, rings, jewellery and dentures becoming loose.
- Poor concentration
- Tiredness and loss of energy
- Altered mood
- Low Body Mass Index (BMI <18.5kg/m²)
- Eating and drinking less than normal
- Difficulties with swallowing



For guests that might be concerned about weight loss, it's important to make the meals as nutritious as possible. High protein/calorie meals and snacks may be more appropriate than following normal 'healthy eating' advice in order to prevent further weight loss and muscle wastage.

When creating menus, you should try fortifying meals with high calorie/protein foods e.g. milk, cream and cheese, to increase the nutritional content as much as possible so that even small volumes of food and drinks are calorific. For more information see Eat Well Age Well's **Understanding Malnutrition and What You Can Do** leaflet.



The **paperweight armband** is a quick and easy tool that can be used to identify if someone is at risk of malnutrition. For more information and to order a free malnutrition toolkit for your lunch club go to www.eatwellagewell.org.uk/toolkit

Physical Activity

Incorporating physical activity alongside a lunch club can help promote appetite and maintain muscle function. Physical activity has many health benefits including improved

mood, cognitive function, strength and reduction of the risk of health problems such as falls, osteoporosis, stroke and type 2 diabetes.

Ideas for physical activities include chair aerobics, yoga, tai chi or even a short walk outdoors. This can also really enhance the social and fun aspect of a lunch club.

Healthy Muscles

Sarcopenia, or the loss of muscle with age, is one of the most important causes of loss of independence in older people.

As we age, we are unable to use protein in the same way to build muscles. Eating less and being less active can result in muscle wastage. Sarcopenia can cause several health problems such as frailty, disability, increased risk of falls as well as longer recovery times. Having a healthy balanced diet, eating protein foods regularly e.g. meat, fish and eggs, and keeping active can help keep muscles strong and healthy.



Dementia

Lunch clubs can be a vital place to eat well, keep active and social for an older person with dementia. There are some things to take into consideration to ensure your lunch club is a welcoming and inclusive space.

Using plates, utensils and tablecloths that are all similar colours or with strong patterns can make it harder for someone to see the food on their plates. Bold simple colours should be used instead wherever possible.

Peripheral vision can be affected in people with Dementia and, as the disease progresses, they can suffer from tunnel vision. Serving food and drinks face-on allows the guest to see the meal or drink in advance and avoids any surprise or distress.

Dementia & Diet

Menus with photographs are helpful in aiding meal choices, as there may be cognitive or verbal impairments which reduce a guest's ability to communicate.

Finger food can sometimes be easier to eat as people may struggle to use cutlery. Examples include mini quiches, fish/chicken goujons, cocktail sausages, small slices of cake and fruit. Serve with sauces to make the foods more palatable and easier to swallow.

Taste changes and changes to food preferences may occur with Dementia. Offering a variety of foods and sweet or strongly flavoured foods may be helpful. Dementia can affect appetite and people may forget to eat even if food is placed in front of them. Gentle prompting can help to remind them to eat.



- Buttered toast fingers
- Boiled eggs
- Mini quiches & sausages
- Cheese cubes
- Chopped fruit
- Cereal bars
- Finger sandwiches
- Slices of fruit/malt loaf

Lunch Clubs

Weekday Wow Factor – Glasgow

This lunch club is for adults aged 21-94 with an average age of around 70. They run a weekly daytime disco and provide sandwiches and snacks to those who attend. It is a Dementia friendly environment which allows people of all dancing abilities to come together and express themselves. The benefits include enhanced physical/mental health and well-being.



Aberdeen Multicultural Centre

This lunch club is open to all ethnic minority community members. They currently have Pakistani, Nepalese, Indian and Bangladeshi participants. Asian food is provided e.g. Nan bread, dal, chicken curry, salad etc. They cover different health related themes e.g. diabetes and offer activities e.g. chair-based yoga.



Soupalunch - Hawick

This lunch club started in 2008. It provides freshly prepared homemade soup on a weekly basis and is mainly volunteer led. Members are from the local community, including many that are older people (90+) who live alone and are isolated. Activities such as knitting and singing are available. Some members just come for lunch, but people are welcome to spend all day at the hall if they wish.



Insch Lunch Club

Friends of Insch Hospital & Community have always been active in the wider community. They identified a gap in the community, particularly with older men, to get together to share some food and enjoy social interaction. It has been running for a few years with the help of volunteers. They serve a 2 course lunch to approx. 20 people once a month.

Lochmaben Senior Citizens Lunch

Lochmaben lunch club meets once a week for 10 months of the year and is run by volunteers. There are 32 members and every week they get homemade soup, cheese and biscuits and tea or coffee. Members pay a small fee to attend and get to enjoy activities such as bingo as well as their lunch. Three course meals are available for special occasions such as St. Andrews Day and Christmas and the club also enjoys an annual summer outing which they can invite their friends to.



Milan Senior Welfare Organisation

This lunch club provides hot 3 course ethnic meals to South Asian communities aged 65+ in Edinburgh and the Lothians. They are Dementia friendly and one day a week is dedicated to those with Dementia or with limited mobility so that they can get a greater level of support. They provide activities such as gentle exercise, supported walks, cognitive therapy and arts & crafts to promote participation and encourage interaction.





Recipe

Mary's Cream of Brocoli Soup

Mary Oswald makes the soup at Soupalunch, the community social lunch of Reaching Out at Hawick Congregational Community Church.

This is a good source of iron and calories.

Serve with brown rolls, or oatcakes.

Ingredients

- 6 heads of broccoli
- 8 medium potatoes (Maris Piper or mashers)
- 6 small onions
- 4 vegetable cubes
- 2 cans evaporated milk (150ml each)
- 4 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons nutmeg
- (4 oz) / 115g butter
- 5 pints of water

Method

1. Chop up vegetables roughly, and fry gently in the butter
2. Take care not to allow the butter to burn
3. Dissolve stock cubes in 1 pint of water, add cumin, nutmeg and add to vegetables
4. Add rest of water, season and simmer for 40 minutes
5. Add evaporated milk
6. Making sure the broccoli is cooked; use a blender to blitz.
7. If extra liquid is needed, use milk, skimmed or full fat.



Contacts





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Eat Well Age Well is part of Scottish charity Food Train supporting local older people at home. Scottish Charity No.24843

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Insch Lunch Club

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Aberdeen Multicultural Centre

www.abmc.org.uk
01224 977424
84 Spring Gardens, Aberdeen AB25 1GN

Soupalunch - Hawick

www.rocon.moonfruit.com/soupalunch

Oxfangs Neighbourhood Centre

www.oxgangsneighbourhoodcentre.org.uk
0131 466 0678
71 Firrhill Drive, Edinburgh, EH13 9EU

Lochmaben Senior Citizens Lunch

www.lochmaben.org.uk/groups/lunch-club

Milan Senior Welfare Organisation - Edinburgh

www.milanswo.co.uk

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