

Your Child's Hospital Stay on the Medical Unit

For Issues Related to Eating Disorders

What is the role of the nutritionist?

A registered dietitian (nutritionist) will complete a nutritional assessment and make recommendations about food and drink to help stabilize your child while on the Medical Unit. The nutritionist will work with Medical Unit staff to see how your child is doing, and will recommend changes to the nutrition plan if needed. The nutritionist may also provide some basic nutrition education for you and your child.

What will happen at meals and snack time?

Patients are expected to complete meals within 30 minutes and snacks within 15 minutes. The goal is to improve physical health and gut function, as well as to encourage normal eating habits. These time limits also allow us to space meal and snack times out over the day.

Will my child be given nutritional supplements?

If your child is unable to complete his meal or snack, staff will provide a nutrition supplement drink to replace the uneaten portion of the meal or snack. Patients are given 10 minutes to drink this supplement.

Will my child need a feeding tube?

Many efforts are made by the medical team to avoid the use of a feeding tube. There may be a time, however, when a tube feeding is needed to help your child become medically stable. Your medical team will discuss this option with you and your child if they feel it may be needed.

How are meals chosen?

Children do not choose their meals and snacks while on the Medical Unit. However, because they are expected to finish meals and snacks provided, they

can identify three foods they do not care for during their assessment with the nutritionist. Your child will not be sent these foods. The nutritionist will help your family choose three longstanding dislikes that pre-date any difficulty your child has with eating. It may take up to 24 hours for the dislikes to be recorded with the hospital's dietary department.

What if my child is on a vegetarian or vegan diet?

Because of the volume of food required to meet the needs of a child on a vegan diet, we are unable to meet this dietary request. We can serve your child a vegetarian diet if it is a religious or family practice. For medical stabilization purposes, however, it is best if your child eats protein from animal sources.

Can I bring outside food and drinks to my child?

Food and drinks are the most important "medicine" to promote medical stability in your child. Dietary prepares meals and snacks for your child based on recommendations provided by your nutritionist. We ask that if your child has not finished the meals and snacks provided by Dietary, that you do not bring other food or drinks. If your child is able to finish what is provided, you are welcome to bring additional items that are not diet foods (low-fat, low-calorie) and that are caffeine-free.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Nutrition Services, (206) 987-2613
- Your Child's Health Care Provider

Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call Marketing Communications at (206) 987-5205.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider.