

FOCUS ON DIABETES AWARENESS AT NELL SAR

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It is estimated that more than five million people in the UK are living with diabetes, which is an all-time high. Data from Diabetes UK shows that more 4.3 million people in the UK live with diabetes. Additionally, 850,000 people could be living with diabetes who are yet to be diagnosed.

Food and Lifestyle Guidance

The British Dietetics Associations guidance for people with diabetes is to:

- Eat a healthy **balanced diet** which includes avoiding processed foods and refined sugars.
- Eat a **whole food diet** with a balance of protein, healthy fats, complex carbs and vegetables.
- Remain **hydrated**.
- **Stay active**.
- **Manage stress** with mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

Older People and Diabetes

Recommendations for older people can differ slightly from the general diabetes guidance. The elderly are more likely to be underweight and at **risk of undernutrition** which means it isn't always appropriate to reduce calories, fats, salt and sugar for every elderly person. Restricted, poor and irregular eating can easily lead to hypoglycaemia where the level of sugar (glucose) in the blood drops too low.

There are many factors which can affect appetite in older people including medication, oral health, dehydration, isolation and illness. To ensure proper support is in place, older people with diabetes should have a **nutritional assessment** carried out by a dietician who can advise on appropriate supplements, weight reduction and low salt diets if required. This can also be a part of the individual care plan if a person lives in a care home.

Diabetes focus at Nellsar

We are fortunate at Nellsar that I'm in the unique position, as an **onsite Nutritionist**, to be able to advise our Homes on building **personalised menu plans**. I can recommend recipes and provide education on how we can best support people through a '*food first*' approach based on individual preferences.

In summary, older **people with diabetes should be assessed and nutritionally supported on an individual basis**. There is no 'one size fits all' approach to diet support and diabetes in care.

I am currently working on an **initiative across our Nellsar Homes** which involves mentoring our Nutrition and Catering Teams on how to clearly show the **healthy and balanced options available on all menus and tea trolleys**. The focus is on helping staff and residents to easily identify the better options to support diabetics – using the term 'healthy option' is preferable, as the term 'diabetic option' is outdated.

I am also sign-posting our Nutrition Leads and Chefs towards **recipes** that can be included on our menus and tea trolleys which offer a healthier and more balanced option for cakes, biscuits and desserts. Key is ensuring inclusivity, variety and appeal for all.

Here are some healthy option recipes from Christine Bailey:

- [**Vegan Cookie Dough Cake**](#)
- [**Gluten Free Vegan Orange Cake**](#)
- [**Chocolate Protein Mug Cake**](#)

Ultimately **food is about enjoyment**, and this should be the case no matter the complexity of any health condition. Diabetes shouldn't stop anyone from enjoying food.

If prepared well, healthier options can be decadent and delicious, and my aim is to help our Nellsar Chefs and Catering Teams prove this!