

# Eating and Drinking

**Support available for people  
experiencing memory difficulties or  
dementia in Sunderland**

**Issue 1 – Published April 2025**



The information in this booklet has been taken from 'Support available for people experiencing memory difficulties or dementia in Sunderland' which has information on a range of subjects which you may also find useful.

Find the full document at: [www.healthwatchsunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchsunderland.com)

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The information in this booklet is a section that has been taken from the full booklet titled, 'Support available for people experiencing memory difficulties or dementia in Sunderland'. The full booklet has information on a range of subjects which you may also find useful.

Healthwatch Sunderland regularly updates these booklets. The copy you have may not be the latest version. For the most current copies of all the associated booklets, please visit: [www.healthwatchsunderland.com](http://www.healthwatchsunderland.com) or call us on 0191 514 7145.

If you have information to add or notice anything outdated in the booklets, please contact us and these will be considered.

# About Healthwatch Sunderland

## Healthwatch Sunderland is your local health and social care champion.

We make sure NHS leaders and social care decision makers hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care. We can also help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.

**It is our vision** to live in a world where we can all get the health and care we need.

**It is our mission** to make sure people's experiences help make health and care better.

**Our values are to:**

- **Listen** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Include** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analyse** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Act** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partner** with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.

## Why we did this work

During our engagement with the Essence Service, which supports people in the early stages of dementia and their carers, we heard from local carers about some of their experiences. They expressed concerns about the lack of information available on local support services following their family members' diagnoses. Many felt unsure about where to go for help and were not aware of the available resources. This feedback was also recognised by the Essence Service during their feedback sessions held in Dementia Action Week 2023.

In response to this need, we collaborated with the Essence Service, carers and other local partners to create a booklet named 'Support available for people experiencing memory difficulties or dementia in Sunderland'. This document offers key support information on a range of subjects. This may be useful for people experiencing memory difficulties and those living with dementia. The information in this booklet, 'Eating and drinking', has been taken from the full booklet.

Please be aware that some of the services mentioned, are only available to people with a dementia diagnosis.



# Eating and drinking



## Eating

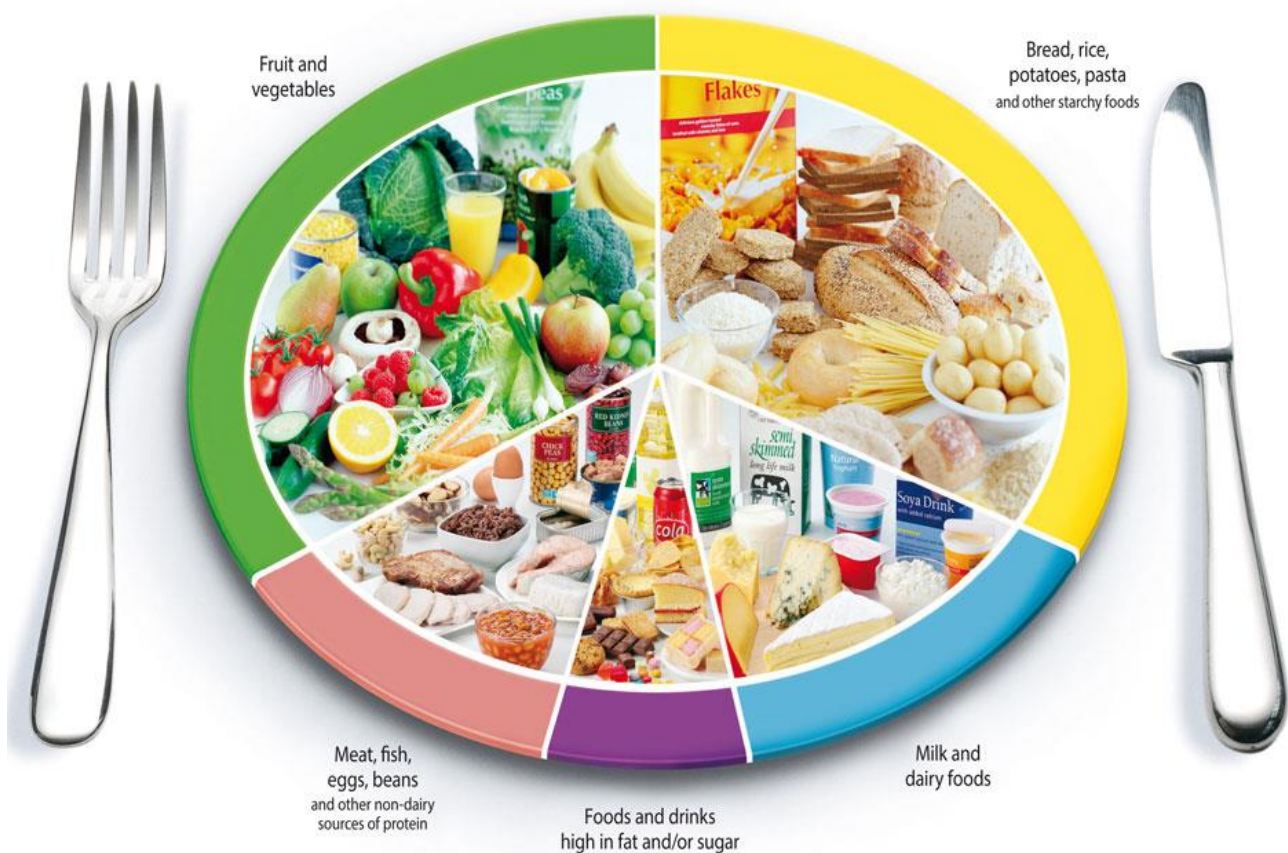
Many people living with dementia experience difficulties with their sight and their perception. This may cause them to misinterpret their surroundings.

Switching from a white plate to a plain coloured plate, such as blue or red can help people with dementia improve their eating, and as a result, their nutritional intake.

## The Eatwell Guide

The Eatwell Guide shows how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.

You do not need to achieve this balance with every meal but try to get the balance right over a day or even a week.



## Essence Service lunch club

Meet new people and enjoy a hot 2 course meal every Friday from 12.00pm – 1.30pm. There is a cost for this service.

Contact the Essence Service for more details and to book your place.



Call: 0191 522 1310

Email: [essenceservice@ageuksunderland.org.uk](mailto:essenceservice@ageuksunderland.org.uk)

Website: [www.essenceservice.org.uk](http://www.essenceservice.org.uk)

# Eating and drinking



## Community Café's

Some of Sunderland's extra care facilities have community cafes on site, which offer a selection of hot and cold meals.

Read more: [www.sunderland.gov.uk](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk) (search 'extra care').

Or call Sunderland City Council: 0191 520 5551

## Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)

Speech and Language Therapy is important for people living with dementia. It helps address difficulties with speech, language, communication, eating, drinking, and swallowing. Speech and Language Therapists work on memory, problem solving, and higher-level thinking skills to maintain independence.

Speak to your GP about referring you to this service.

## Meal deliveries

- **Aunt Mauds** – Provide a hot meal delivery to anyone throughout the Sunderland area. All freshly cooked British classics made from scratch.

Call: 0191 521 2573 or 079 749 11927

Email: [stantheman39@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:stantheman39@hotmail.co.uk)

Website: [www.auntmaudsmealsonwheels.co.uk](http://www.auntmaudsmealsonwheels.co.uk)

- **Wiltshire Farm Foods** – Prepared food delivery service. Contact to request a brochure or browse their website:.

Call: 01388 765500

Website: [www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com](http://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com)

- **Meals on Wheels UK** – A research team based at the University of Bristol have developed this free to use website, where you can:
  - Search a database for details of meals on wheels providers who deliver to their address.
  - Find out more about the benefits of meals on wheels.
  - Discover a wealth of information and resources relating to meals on wheels.

Website: [www.mealsonwheelsuk.org](http://www.mealsonwheelsuk.org)

“Helping a person with dementia to maintain a healthy diet can be difficult, but it's important to encourage them to eat well.”

# Eating and drinking



## Drinking

People with dementia may not always recognise when they are thirsty or be able to express their thirst. This may mean that they do not drink enough. They may become dehydrated. This may increase the risk of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs, commonly known as water infections).

### Hits and tips for good hydration

- Allow the person time to drink without rushing.
- Sit and have a drink with them.
- Ensure the person is sitting upright and comfortably.
- If carers are coming in, ask them to offer drinks at the start and end of visits.
- Offer a drink whenever anyone visits – drinking is a sociable activity.
- Attending a memory café, day centre or lunch club may encourage the person to drink. They may imitate what other people are doing, and be more willing to take direction from a staff member or volunteer.
- Consider if there are any underlying problems, such as pain, depression or an infection – if in doubt, contact their GP.
- If the person has difficulty swallowing, ask their GP for a referral to a dietician.

### What to offer

Try a range of different drinks. This could be water, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, milk, fruit juice and squash. Try drinks at different temperatures to see if they would prefer a cold or warm drink. Try offering stronger or sweeter flavours, like a less diluted squash.

Fluid intake can come from food, too, such as jelly, ice cream, ice lollies, sorbet, soup, yoghurt, custard, watermelon, pineapple, cucumber, pears, and even jacket potatoes.

Offer the person their favourite mug, glass or beaker. Different sizes and shapes of cup may help, to see if they have a preference. You may want to try a clear glass so they can see what's inside, or colourful cups to attract their attention.

Always try to offer help if the person is struggling to pick up or drink from a cup. Always ensure they always have a drink within reach. Check that their cup or glass isn't too heavy or a difficult shape to grasp and describe the drink you are offering.

Keep the cup topped up so they can see it's full and it's easy to drink from. If you're measuring fluid intake, pour drinks from a jug so you can monitor how much the person has drunk.

### Boost hydration with Jelly Drops

Jelly drops are sugar free water sweets made of 95% water. Designed to support health and hydration for people living with dementia and others that may struggle with hydration. Available in 6 juicy flavours.

Call: 0808 164 8977

Website: [www.jellydrops.com](http://www.jellydrops.com)

# Eating and drinking



## Alcohol – What to do if a person with dementia drinks too much alcohol

Dementia UK say, while drinking in moderation can be an enjoyable part of life, it may have a negative impact on a person with dementia. For example, by increasing confusion, disorientation and the risk of falls.

Dementia may cause some people to drink too much alcohol. This could be because:

- They have a form of dementia that affects their impulse control, like frontotemporal dementia.
- They forget how much alcohol they have drunk.
- They forget when they last drank alcohol.
- They have changes in taste that make alcohol more appealing.

If the person with dementia seems to be consuming alcohol excessively, you may want to avoid having alcohol in the home and provide low or zero alcohol alternatives instead.

A healthcare professional can advise you on whether the person should reduce their alcohol intake. They can also help devise a plan for cutting back or stopping drinking.

Bear in mind that alcohol may interfere with some forms of medication that the person with dementia may be taking. This may stop the medication working well and increase the risk of side effects. A GP or pharmacist can advise you about whether it is safe to drink alcohol when taking a medication.

## Wear Recovery

Based in Sunderland, Wear Recovery can offer support if a person wants to make positive changes to their alcohol use. Working across Sunderland offering one-to-one, group, and peer support. They will support people with any questions or concerns you might have about alcohol, your mental health, and more.

If you are concerned about how much a person is drinking, contact them:

Call: 0800 234 6798

Email: [SunderlandSMS.info@cgl.org.uk](mailto:SunderlandSMS.info@cgl.org.uk)

Website: [www.changegrowlive.org](http://www.changegrowlive.org)

# Thank you to our partners

This work would not have been possible without the support from our partners and local carers with lived experience of living and supporting a loved one with a dementia diagnosis. Thank you on behalf of all at Healthwatch Sunderland for your time, your passion and your commitment to producing this booklet. It is hoped it will support and improve the lives of people experiencing memory difficulties, dementia and their carers across the City of Sunderland.

Thank you to:

## Local carers



South Tyneside and Sunderland  
NHS Foundation Trust



North East and  
North Cumbria



Cumbria, Northumberland,  
Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust







**Website: [healthwatchsunderland.com](http://healthwatchsunderland.com)**

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