

Healthy ageing with dairy

Fact sheet for catering companies and chefs in residential aged care

KEY MESSAGES

Food and nutrition are critical to the health and well being of older people, particularly those receiving residential aged care.

Dairy helps to build muscle mass and bone density, which can diminish with age. A recent study has found that older people who eat a minimum of 3.5 serves of dairy a day are significantly less likely to experience falls and fractures, particularly hip fractures.¹

Background

Australia's population is ageing, increasing demand for residential aged care. Currently:

- 30% of hip fractures occur in Aged Care Homes
- 10% of residents are hospitalised annually from a fall
- Around 70% of Australians are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition.

In addition, all food groups are under consumed in aged care homes, with the dairy food group only meeting 25% of the recommendations.

What was done?

In a world-first study undertaken by the University of Melbourne has linked milk, cheese and yoghurt with the prevention of falls and fractures in older people. The study found that, when dairy consumption was increased from an average of 2 to 3.5 serves per day, older adults in residential care experienced a 33% reduction in all fractures, a 46% reduction in hip fractures and an 11% reduction in falls.

One serve of dairy is equivalent to:



MILK
1 cup
(250ml)



CHEESE
2 slices
(40g)



YOGHURT
¾ cup
(200g)



RICOTTA
½ cup
(120g)

These incredible findings, which were statistically significant, were seen within five months of implementation of the trial.

The ground-breaking research involved a two-year randomised control trial in 60 Australian residential aged care services. The findings have been published internationally and the extraordinary results have prompted conversations on dairy consumption for older Australians.

A focus on dairy

The Australian Government is actively working to improve food and drink provided in residential aged care services, including a strong focus on the provision of dairy to help residents meet their daily protein and nutrient requirement and overall food enjoyment.

For example:

- Providers are required to report on food and nutrition, including expenditure on food, the quality and quantity of food, daily protein intake and the plan to improve daily living services **as part of the National Residential Aged Care Mandatory Quality Indicators Program**.
- Providers will also need to demonstrate how they meet the specific dietary needs of older people, with a focus on protein and calcium rich foods as part of upcoming changes to the **Residential Aged Care Quality Standards**.

What does this mean for you as a provider of food to residential aged care services?

By adjusting your service offering to ensure providers are giving residents a minimum of 3.5 serves of dairy a day, you can directly support providers to:

- Meet their regulatory obligations
- Improve residents clinical outcomes by boosting nutrition and reduce risk of malnutrition, falls, fractures and hospitalisation
- Optimise residents quality of life and food enjoyment.

¹ Luliano S, Poon S, Robbins J, Bui M, Wang X, De Groot L, Van Loan M, Zadeh AG, Nguyen T, Seeman E. Effect of dietary sources of calcium and protein on hip fractures and falls in older adults in residential care: cluster randomised controlled trial. *BMJ*. 2021;375.

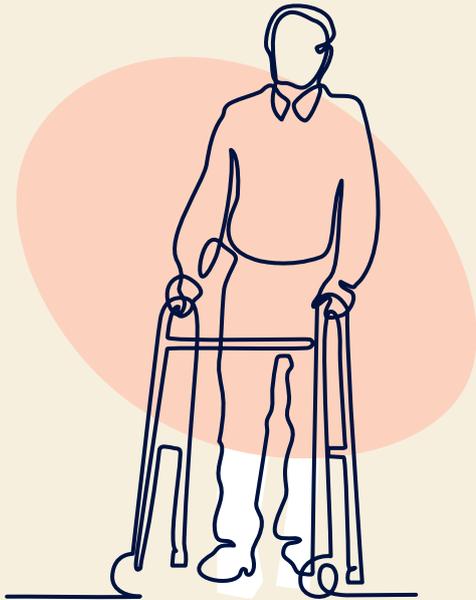
Where do I start?

Increasing the dairy content of the food and drinks you provide is simple.

There are lots of low-cost ways that dairy can be added to everyday staples and provided as snacks throughout the day.

For example, by adding cheese to rissoles or mashed potatoes, or including options such as fortified milkshakes, cheesy scones, yoghurt or cheese and biscuits as snacks.

Some ideas including recipes are available at dairy.com.au/ageing.



How do I talk to my customers about this?

Given the current focus on nutrition, providers are looking for ways to improve their food service.

Talk to your customers about how you can help them to improve residents outcomes and meet their regulatory obligations.

Providing adequate milk, cheese and yoghurt is an easy and low-cost intervention. **The daily cost is \$0.66 AUD per resident, per day.** When the cost of care is considered holistically, costs related to the provision of extra dairy products are more than offset by the improved clinical outcomes for residents. Fewer falls and broken bones reduces the need for nursing and specialist staff intervention and hospitalisations.

Finally, dairy is delicious! Providers can engage with their residents to find out what dairy-based meals and snacks they would enjoy.

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about how you can help older people to include more dairy in their diet and improve their quality of life, visit: dairy.com.au/health/healthy-ageing-with-dairy

