



Nutrition Therapy Questions & Answers for a Skilled Nursing Center

Q. My doctor told me to follow a "salt free" diet, why would I NOT be able to receive that type of diet at Parkway Health & Rehabilitation?

A. In most cases, the doctor may want the patient with a heart condition to follow a "low sodium" diet. Our center offers a more liberalized, "No Added Salt Diet". However, for those individuals wishing to adhere to a more restrictive sodium diet, the center is able to make modifications to lower sodium levels. There are recent studies indicating that little benefit and potential harm can be the result of following a very low sodium diet; (less than 2300 mg daily).

Q. I am on Coumadin (a "blood thinner") and I can NOT eat any green vegetables. Why am I being served green leafy vegetables?

A. Vitamin K, found in green leafy vegetables, can alter the effectiveness of your medication. For this reason it is important to keep your Vitamin K intake consistent. **It doesn't necessarily mean you must eliminate it from your diet completely.** A sudden increase in intake will decrease the medication's effectiveness, while drastically reducing your Vitamin K intake will increase its effects, which may be equally detrimental. To keep an individual's lab values (PT/INR levels) stable, individuals should keep their Vitamin K "green leafy vegetable" intake consistent from day to day. To help an individual achieve this goal, Parkway Health & Rehabilitation Center serves only 1 serving per day of high Vitamin K "green leafy vegetables".

Q. I have Diabetes and follow a "strict" diabetic meal pattern. I notice that the meals at Parkway Health & Rehabilitation Center include sweet desserts and regularly sweetened items; how will this affect my blood sugar?

A. Many years ago it was believed that people with Diabetes were restricted from eating all forms of sugar as it was believed that this was the best way to control their disease. **Evidenced-based research has now shown that we utilize carbohydrates similarly regardless of their source.** Bread for example, has 15 grams carbohydrates and has the same effect on your blood sugar levels as a small portion of cake. The most important key is the amount of carbohydrates consumed at each meal. Parkway Health & Rehabilitation provides a reduced carbohydrate diet. If one prefers to follow a more restrictive diet, modifications of this diet can be made to meet your needs. We are more than happy to make changes at your request.

Q. I never had to use insulin before going into the hospital, why do I need it now?

A. This happens to many patients with Diabetes. Keep in mind that the reason you are at Parkway Health & Rehabilitation Center is because you have had a change in your medical condition. The change in your medical condition, whether it is simple, complex, temporary or permanent can often cause elevations in blood sugar levels requiring insulin. Emotional stress can also contribute to unstable blood sugar levels. It is likely that an improvement in your medical condition will eventually result in blood sugar stability.

Q. Does the liberalized diet served to me here, mean that I can eat whatever and whenever I want?

A. Yes and No. It is important to enjoy the foods that you eat. This may include a special snack or a favorite food from home once in a while, which is fine. However, eating whatever and whenever one wants, can lead to unwanted weight gain and problems with one's blood sugar, sodium level, and fluid gain. **It is important to consistently eat regular well balanced meals.**

Q. What are the risks and benefits with following such liberalized diets?

A. Since following a restricted diet in a Skilled Nursing Center may be less appealing after an illness, patients may actually experience poor meal and liquid intake, which can lead to further complications such as malnutrition and dehydration. If one were to follow a restricted diet and refuse to eat or not eat enough, it becomes a risk to the patient's health. Studies show that liberalized meals are more appealing to patients and therefore, they are more apt to be eaten and enjoyed, while having little to no effect on patient's blood sugar. If a patient prefers to follow the same type of strict diet they were following before becoming ill, Parkway Health & Rehabilitation Center is happy to comply with patient choice.

Q. Are most Skilled Nursing Centers using Liberalized diets?

A. Poor meal and liquid intake is a serious concern among seniors, and in a Skilled Nursing Center it is a prime focus. Serving meals that are more appealing and nutritious increases the probability that our patients and residents will eat properly throughout the day, thereby improving health benefits and overall quality of life. Experts suggest consistency and well balanced meals are most important, which Skilled Nursing Centers follow as part of regulatory guidelines. Liberalized diets are becoming more standard in the Skilled Nursing setting.

If you have any further questions or concerns about your diet here at Parkway Health & Rehabilitation Center, please ask to speak with our Registered Dietitian, Diet Technician, or Certified Dietary Manager.



Parkway Health & Rehabilitation

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