



Pass the Mountain Dew, Lay's Barbeque Chips and Almond Joy Bar!

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Holidays and *special events* are celebrated worldwide for a variety of reasons, including the commemoration of historical occasions, as well as particular days that have ethnic, cultural and religious significance. The celebration of these *special days* is unique to each person's culture and society. More importantly, the celebratory process is both essential and meaningful to each resident's Quality of Life. When push comes to shove, most residents would agree that they love a celebration! In fact, most people love sharing their milestones through dance, decoration, song, story, and of course food!

The Centers for Medicare Medicaid Services' Final Rule to Reform the Requirements for Long-Term Care Facilities has established clear and precise expectations for all skilled nursing communities regarding Food and Nutrition Services (483.60) ~ October 2016.

The finalized provisions reflect advances in the theory and practice of service delivery and safety, and implement sections of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Regulations specific to Food and Nutrition that are emphasized during Phase 1 and carried over into Phases 2 and 3 of the Reform Act include the following requirements:

- ✦ Continued food and nutrition protections
- ✦ Qualified Dietary Staff – sufficient and competent
- ✦ Updated education requirements
- ✦ Reasonable efforts to address religious, cultural and ethnic needs
- ✦ Snacks
- ✦ Policy regarding use and storage of foods

Today's long-term care communities are increasingly focusing their attention on upgrading dining and serving residents with healthy choices throughout the dining process. Along with making significant changes for weekend brunches and holiday/themed celebrations, these efforts hinge on making the residents' dining experiences something that they delight in and anticipate. This, most certainly, includes providing those mouth-watering desserts, yummy snacks, and yes, healthy snack alternatives, that residents truly *want* to eat, experience and enjoy! And, this is where we, Recreation/Activity Professionals, come into the *grand* picture!

As we plan and organize our residents' celebrations, these are other policies and procedures that must be consistently implemented:

- ✦ Snacks and foods must reflect residents' religious, cultural and ethnic needs and preferences
- ✦ Snacks and foods must be updated periodically by a qualified dietitian or other clinically qualified nutrition specialists
- ✦ Residents have the right to personal dietary choices
- ✦ Consider resident allergies, intolerances and preferences to ensure adequate hydration
- ✦ Availability of suitable, nourishing alternative meals and snacks for residents who want to eat at non-traditional times or outside of scheduled meal times
- ✦ Care plan the need for a feeding assistant whenever foods/snacks are offered
- ✦ Clarify residents are not prohibited from consuming foods/snacks not procured by the healthcare community; follow established guidelines set forth by the community regarding use/storage of foods/snacks brought by family and visitors

It is a daunting yet necessary challenge for Activity Professionals to find just the right foods/snacks that make our residents feel satisfied and fulfilled. On top of this, finding nutritionally-balanced snacks is another important way to help supplement the diets of those residents whose appetites and health is waning. Many of our residents eat inadequate portions at meals, thus making snacks a significant part of their diet. Below are three great ways snacks can play a significant role in a resident's Recreation Care Plan:

✚ Community Value

Snacks are a great way to integrate healthy eating into social situations, offering the resident an opportunity to mingle over a mug of cider and a homemade treat. Social interaction is an important part of community living, helping the resident stay active and energized.

✚ Well-Being

Healthy snacks are nourishing. They help supplement the diet, filling in nutritional gaps.

✚ Leisure Interest

Food preparation can be a meaningful and enjoyable activity program. Some residents still desire to work in the kitchen, though operating certain appliances and fixing a full meal is sometimes frustrating and complicated. Preparing finger foods and other snack items is a small-scale way to keep seniors cooking and giving back to others.

Snack options to consider including throughout a resident's Care Plan:

- Precut Veggies & Dips
- Fresh Fruits
- Nuts ~ watch allergies!
- Cheese
- Popcorn
- Boiled Eggs
- Finger sandwiches
- Whole wheat crackers, pretzels or chips
- Rice cakes
- Natural Granola, granola bars or trail mix
- Dried fruit
- High Fiber Cereal
- Teas, juices, milk, coffee ~ fluids, fluids, fluids!

Using snacks throughout a resident's daily activity program not only helps meet basic nutritional needs, it also encourages resident-to-resident companionship and socialization. Don't forget that **you**, the Activity Professional, are an active and important member of the healthcare community's Interdisciplinary Team. Begin this resident-specific *food journey* by talking with each person regarding favorite foods and snack preferences. Discuss the different ways they like each food prepared and accurately document their responses in the Care Plan. Reminisce about the various smells and tastes. Make a point to meet with your community's dietitian/dietary team and target specific conversation on creative ways to implement resident-based food/snack programs that bring joy and laughter to each and every resident.

For patients with dementia, traditional dishes and snacks can create joy and boost patients' sense of well-being, according to research published online January 11 in the Journal of Clinical Nursing. Ingrid Hanssen, R.N., from the Lovisenberg Diaconal University College in Oslo, and Britt Moene Kuven, R.N., from the Haraldsplass Diaconal University College in Bergen both in Norway, explored the meaning of traditional foods and snacks to institutionalized patients with dementia. In three qualitative studies, they conducted in-depth interviews of family members and nurses experienced in dementia care in South Africa, and among ethnic Norwegians and the Sami in Norway. The researchers found that traditional foods/snacks fostered feelings of belonging and joy. Familiar tastes and smells evoked pleasant memories and boosted patients' sense of well-being, identity, and belonging. Furthermore, words were produced that were not normally spoken."

This study provides insight into culture-sensitive dietary needs of institutionalized patients with dementia," the authors write." Besides helping to avoid undernutrition, being served traditional dishes may be very important to reminiscence, joy, thriving, and Quality of Life."

<http://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-01-traditional-foods-joy-dementia-patients>.

Working together to build lasting moments that bring back special remembrances of food and celebration, two of the most important events in a resident's life, is truly the art and science of the Recreation/Activity profession. Let the magic begin!



"The more you praise and celebrate your life, the more there is in life to celebrate!"

~ Oprah Winfrey