

Making a Meal of It – Can Finger Foods Improve Dietary Intake among People after Stroke?

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Abstract

Purpose: To determine the feasibility, acceptability and implementation cost of using a finger food menu (foods eaten without cutlery) on an acute stroke rehabilitation ward, to inform important parameters for a future randomized controlled trial.

Methods: The feasibility study employs a mixed methods design, with quantitative, qualitative and economic components. NHS ethical approval was obtained. A finger food menu, developed alongside the hospital catering team, dietitians and with patient and public involvement, is being trialled over lunchtime meals for patients on an acute stroke rehabilitation ward. Dietary intake is collected alongside patient mealtime observations and semi-structured interviews with patient participants and NHS staff. The interviews will explore views and experiences and the facilitators and barriers to using the menu on the ward. A cost consequence analysis will be undertaken as a form of economic evaluation.

Results: Data collection is in progress and due to complete in September 2019. Preliminary results suggest that evaluating and using a finger food menu is feasible and acceptable to patients on stroke rehabilitation ward.

Implications: Finger foods are naturally energy dense foods and therefore have potential to increase energy intake for patients. The presentation of finger food should be designed to ensure they are easy and safe for people to transfer from the plate to the mouth. The effect of offering finger foods in hospital has not been formally evaluated. This feasibility study will inform a future larger follow up study, to evaluate the effectiveness of finger foods in hospital for a wider patient group.

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