

Aged Care Quality Standards 6 Overview



What Is Standard 6?

The introduction of Standard 6: Food and Nutrition under Australia's strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards marks the first time food and nutrition in residential aged care has been established as a standalone standard with its own dedicated outcomes and activities. The strengthened Quality Standards came into effect on 1 November 2025 when the new Aged Care Act took effect.

Standard 6 requires registered aged care providers to partner with older people and understand their food and drink preferences, and it applies only to providers in registration category 6 delivering residential care.

What Older People Should Experience

The standard is anchored in the resident's perspective. The expectation statement for older people is: "I receive plenty of food and drinks that I enjoy. Food and drinks are appetising, nutritious and safe, and meet my needs and preferences. The dining experience is enjoyable, includes variety and supports a sense of belonging."

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The Four Key Outcomes

6.1 - Partnering with Older People The provider partners with older people to provide a quality food service, which includes appealing and varied food and drinks and an enjoyable dining experience.

6.2 - Assessment of Nutritional Needs and Preferences The provider understands the specific nutritional needs of older people and assesses each older person's current needs, abilities and preferences in relation to what and how they eat and drink.

This includes dietary needs and modifications (such as nutritional needs, allergies, intolerances, texture, and cultural and religious needs), as well as the level and type of support a person needs to eat or drink.

6.3 - Provision of Food and Drink Older people have food and drinks that are appetising, flavoursome and nutritious, with variation and choice about what they eat and drink, and are able to eat and drink as much as they want.

6.4 - Dining Experience Older people are supported to eat and drink, and the dining experience meets the needs and preferences of older people to support social engagement, function and quality of life.

This includes making sufficient workers available to support older people, as well as creating opportunities for residents to share food and drinks with visitors.



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What This Means for Chefs

Compliance with Standard 6 requires understanding the stated outcomes and being able to provide proof of how these have been implemented. Menus must offer rotational variety, seasonal produce, diverse protein sources, and culturally significant dishes, to prevent monotony.

For residents with dysphagia, chefs must ensure texture-modified meals retain visual appeal and flavour complexity. The standards encourage the use of shaping tools or moulds to present these foods in a more familiar, visually appealing way a change that preserves dignity, supports appetite, and fosters a better relationship with food.

Standard 6 uses Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) as guidelines, requiring chefs to implement HACCP protocols for food safety. Meals must also be consistent with what is outlined on the menu - residents should be able to trust that what is served aligns with what was promised.

What This Means for Dietitians

Collaboration with dietitians and clinical teams is mandatory to conduct nutritional assessments for all residents. Chefs must then translate these assessments into individualised meal plans, ensuring alignment with medical requirements while keeping meals flavoursome and appealing. Regular audits of meal intake records and weight monitoring data are essential to identify residents at risk of malnutrition.



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The Food, Nutrition, and Dining Hotline (1800 844 044) offers direct access to dietitians for real-time problem solving, supporting the capacity to address complex cases as they arise.

The Dining Experience as a Whole

Standard 6 highlights dining as a holistic experience, incorporating food, environment and engagement. Environmental factors such as adequate lighting, noise reduction, the provision of adaptive utensils for residents with limited dexterity, and culturally appropriate utensils such as chopsticks are now requirements.

Key Definitions

Dining experience refers to the complete experience, including the environment, service, ambience, aroma, company, time provided to eat, serving size, temperature, and presentation of food and drinks.

The standards encourage the use of shaping tools or moulds to present these foods in a more familiar, visually appealing way a change that preserves dignity, supports appetite, and fosters a better relationship with food.

Dining needs include consideration of dietary requirements, allergies, intolerances, relevant health conditions, and religious or cultural preferences. For the full Standard 6 guidance, visit the [Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission](#).

