

MDS Alert

Reader Question: Encourage Social Distancing at Mealtimes

Question: It's my understanding that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended that residents should not eat communally and should only eat in their rooms. A lot of our residents are feely extremely isolated, as mealtime was a big source of socialization for them. Can they eat together safely?

Tennessee Subscriber

Answer: CMS clarified in a recent memorandum that residents do not have to eat alone in their rooms - as long as the facility can arrange tables in the dining area so that residents "eat alone, together."

"... Nursing homes should adhere to social distancing, such as being seated at separate tables at least six feet apart. We note that social distancing should be practiced at all times (not just while dining). We further note that eating in dining areas with appropriate social distancing only applies to residents without signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, and without a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19," CMS says.