**The Importance of good Nutrition and Hydration**

With around three million people at risk of malnutrition in the UK, Caremark aims to raise awareness and educate people on the value of food and drink in maintaining health and wellbeing.

Nutrition and Hydration is an essential part of our clients’ health and wellbeing, and with good weather fast approaching, it is more important than ever for elderly people to keep hydrated. People aged 65 years and older are at increased risk of heat-related illness, such as dehydration, as the body loses more fluids than normal through sweat. Poor practice in nutrition and hydration care can lead to serious and avoidable harm to clients’ health and wellbeing, and can even lead to death.

**Seven signs of inadequate nutrition:**

· Unexplained fatigue – this is a common side effect of iron deficiency, which can lead to anaemia, indicated by low levels of red blood cells

· Brittle and dry hair

· Ridged or spoon-shaped nails

· Mouth problems

· Diarrhea

· Apathy or irritability

· Lack of appetite

**Six signs of inadequate hydration:**

· Dryness of the mouth, lips and tongue

· Sunken eyes

· Dry inelastic skin

· Drowsiness, confusion or disorientation

· Dizziness

· Low blood pressure

Older people are especially at risk of becoming dehydrated, which could lead to other health issues. However, good hydration contributes to physical and mental good health. It helps the body to fight diseases and absorb nutrients and medication, as well as preventing dehydration.

**Top tips for eating and drinking well**

If you’re looking to improve your diet to stay healthy and hydrated, these tips could help:

* Drink water regularly throughout the day. Two litres or six to eight glasses a day is recommended by NHS England.
	+ Coffee, tea, fruit juice, soda water all count.
	+ Make ice lollies from fruit juice or a mix of juice and water.
	+ Keep water accessible – try putting a lightweight jug of water and a cup near their favourite seat.
* Food can account for approximately 20 percent of your daily fluid intake, so opt for foods that naturally contain water, such as cucumbers and watermelons.
* Try to eat at least five portions of different types of fruit and vegetable a day. Offer smoothies, milkshakes, hot soups/broths.
* Cut down on saturated fat, sugar and salt. Eating too much salt, in particular, can raise blood pressure and lead to heart disease or a stroke.
* And remember – staying active is an important part of maintaining overall good health. Make sure you drink more water as your exercise, especially in warmer weather.