

Good Food First – Tips to help eating & drinking

Here are some things you can do to help make eating and drinking easier and more comfortable if you experience difficulties.

Before eating:

- Eat when you feel fully awake and alert
- If you wear dentures at meal times, make sure they fit well
- Make yourself comfortable
- Sit in an upright position
- Small, frequent meals may be easier.

During eating:

- You should be able to reach your meal, drink and cutlery comfortably
- Try not to talk and eat at the same time as this can sometimes cause difficulty with swallowing
- Allow as much time as you need for your meal
- Allow time between each mouthful
- Slow and relaxed eating is best
- Reduce all distractions around you to help you to concentrate.

If someone is helping you with your meals or drinks they should:

- Sit at the same height as you so you can maintain your posture
- Give you time in between mouthfuls to swallow before giving you more food.

After eating:

- Try to remain upright for 20 – 30 minutes after eating
- Check your mouth is empty. Remove any food that may be left.

Remember

- Regular mouth care is important.

Signs of swallowing difficulties may include:

- Difficulty chewing, or avoiding foods that are difficult to chew or swallow
- Food left in the mouth after a meal
- Difficulty starting to swallow
- Coughing or choking during or after eating and/or drinking
- Regular chest infections
- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Eating more slowly than usual
- Feeling scared or frightened when eating or drinking
- Food or fluid falling out of the mouth.

If you experience problems contact your GP, District Nurse or local Speech & Language Therapy Department for further advice.