

FEEDING SUGGESTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH MOVEMENT DISORDERS AND/OR COGNITIVE LOSS

1. Sit upright, preferably in a chair, during meals.
2. Eliminate distractions such as television or conversation during meals.
3. Concentrate on maintaining a slow, steady rate of feeding.
4. Keep the plate of food in the line for vision, for instance, by placing it on a telephone book, if you have difficulty looking down.
5. Substitute a pair of reading glasses for bifocals, which are often ineffective in the setting of impaired downward gaze.
6. Experiment with different plates and utensils. Plates with a rim can be useful for keeping food on the plate. Using a spoon instead of a fork, or one with a modified grip, can make it easier to eat.
7. Experiment with different cups and glasses. Many different cups are available to restrict how much liquid you can take in your mouth at once. Safe swallowing cups or dysphagia cups help maintain your head in a safe swallowing position, usually head neutral or chin down.

SWALLOWING SUGGESTIONS:

1. Make sure the mouth and throat are clear of excessive secretions/saliva prior to eating or drinking.
2. Maintain the head in a slightly chin-tucked position when eating or drinking.
3. Avoid extending the head back while eating, drinking or taking medications.

4. Avoid taking too large a bite, drinking too rapidly or placing more than one bite in your mouth before swallowing.

5. Alternate swallowing food and liquids to assist with clearance of drier or more textured foods.

6. Avoid highly textured foods (red meats, raw vegetables, etc.) or dry particulate foods (rice, pretzels, potato chips, etc.) Consider changing to soft moist foods such as canned fruits or cooked vegetables, fish and chicken complemented with gravies and sauces.

7. Avoid items of mixed consistencies, such as cold cereals, chicken noodle or vegetable soups and fruit cocktail. These items should be blended into one consistency.

8. Thin liquids may be difficult to swallow because they move faster through the mouth and throat or because there is a slight delay in the onset of the swallow and closure of the airway. Thicken liquids with a commercial thickener (such as Thick-It or Thicken Up, etc.) potato or banana flakes or fruit purees.

9. It may be easier to take medications with a spoon of puree consistency such as pudding or applesauce instead of liquids. Do not crush medications unless approved by a physician.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS:

1. It is important to maintain good oral hygiene.

2. A portable suction machine may be of value to assist with clearance of secretions, particularly at meal times. Drinking more water, or sometimes use of carbonated beverages may help reduce or thin secretions. Your physician may have suggestions for medications that dry up secretions. Avoid medications that dry up secretions, making them thick and ropey and more difficult to manage.

3. It is important that the caregiver be educated in the use of the Heimlich maneuver. Ask your physician, nurse or therapist for instructions.

4. Monitor for weight loss.

5. Monitor the medications being prescribed because some of them may cause the swallowing problems or make it worse.

6. It is important to be alert to the signs of pneumonia, including increased chest congestion, chronic low grade fevers, increased cough or change in sputum.

7. The use of nutritional supplements such as Ensure, Carnation Instant Breakfast, Sustacal, etc. may be of value to increase caloric intake quickly and easily.

8. Supervision during all meals is always a good idea.

There are cookbooks available for those who have difficulty swallowing:

Non-Chew Cookbook by J. Randy Wilson; Wilson Publishing, Inc. PO Box 2190 Glenwood Spring, CO 81602-2190

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MEALS; The Muscular Dystrophy Association 810 Seventh Avenue New York NY 10019

Pureed Food with Substance and Style; Imaginart Communication Products 307 Arizona Street, Bisbee AZ 85603 PH: 800/828-1376

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