



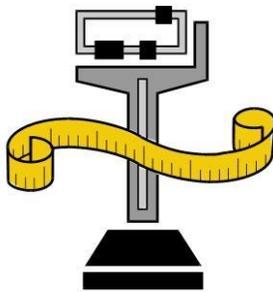
Feeding Challenges for Caregivers

You may be faced with feeding problems when you care for someone who needs your help or is confused. It is important they eat a healthy diet and drink enough fluid. Using some of the tips listed below may be helpful.

Challenges

Tips

Unplanned weight loss



- Offer 4-5 small meals during the day.
- Provide nutrient rich snacks and finger foods.
- Add dry milk powder to cereals, soups, scrambled eggs, mashed potatoes, and casseroles for extra protein and calories.
- Carry snacks with you when you go out during the day.
- Monitor intake by keeping a food record for a few days. Notify your medical team if intake is less than usual.

Decreased appetite

- Offer favorite foods more often.
- Offer 4-5 mini-meals or snacks on a regular schedule.
- Pleasant food smells may increase appetite.
- Other odors may decrease appetite.
- Seek help for depression.
- Check for constipation and/or mouth pain.

Lack of focus while eating



- Reduce distractions during meal times by avoiding background music, television, or heated conversations.
- Use a white plate with a simple contrasting colored tablecloth or placemat to help distinguish the plate from the table. Keep table setting simple and avoid patterned tablecloths and placemats.
- Have foods already cut-up and bread buttered.
- Only have 2-3 foods on the plate at a time.
- Use gentle verbal cues to direct eating.
- Present colorful and flavorful foods.
- Allow the person to make food selections.

Difficulty with utensils



- Offer chopped foods or finger foods.
- Place items in easy reach.
- Give only one utensil at a time, spoons are easier to use than forks. Omit the knife when possible.
- Gently assist with placing utensil in hand and offer hand-over-hand assistance when needed.
- Avoid plastic utensils.
- Try adaptive devices such as a divided plate, sippy-cup, built-up utensils, plates with suction cups, non-slip placemats, bendable straws, and plate guards.

Chewing and/or swallowing problems



- Avoid difficult to chew foods such as nuts, seeds, raw vegetables, and hard fruits.
- Offer soft foods.
- If the person cannot swallow whole foods, grind, cut-up, or blenderize foods.
- Use verbal commands like “chew now”.
- Check for tooth problems, ill fitting dentures, gum disease, or mouth sores.
- Be alert to choking signs; learn the Heimlich maneuver.
- Thicken runny items with potato flakes or thickening products.
- Discuss chewing/swallowing problems with a speech therapist.

Desire for sweets/ high calorie foods which may lead to unwanted weight gain



- Offer regular meals and provide healthy snacks.
- Offer high calorie foods less often.
- Reduce access to these foods (lock cabinets or hide food).
- Substitute similar foods that are healthy.
- Use low-sugar or sugar-free substitutes.
- Introduce pleasant activity as a distraction.

Sundown Syndrome

- Carry on normal evening activities and keep a routine.
- Go for frequent walks outdoors or in bright light to get needed exercise and sunlight.
- Avoid daytime sleeping.