

DHEC Home Care Teaching: Feeding Techniques, Positioning and Utensil Use



Changes that occur with aging can make it harder for older adults to swallow or feed themselves. Medications and the loss of some senses can also affect your appetite. There are things that you or your caregiver can do that can help.

I. Preparing and serving food to improve nutritional intake

1. Eat five to six small meals rather than three large meals.
2. Eat the most nutritious foods first.
3. Chop or cut food into bite-size pieces.
4. Take enough time to chew and swallow each bite.
5. Position foods on your plate where you can see them best.
6. Combine foods into one dish: i.e. combine eggs, bacon, potatoes and spinach into an omelet.



II. Positioning to prevent problems and increase intake

1. Sit in a chair that supports your posture and keeps you sitting up straight.
2. Sit on a cushion or in a chair that has some padding for comfort.
3. Sit a comfortable distance away from the table.
4. Avoiding lying down for at least 30 minutes after you eat to allow food time to digest.

III. Eating and drinking utensils to help if you have less strength or movement

1. Built-up handles reduce the need for fine control of utensils and instead only requires a full hand grasp.
2. Bendable handles can be adjusted to angle utensils.
3. Weighted handles decrease the amount of movement in a shaking hand.
4. Swivel utensils decrease spilling of food between the plate and your mouth if your hand shakes.
5. Universal cuff will let you feed yourself if you can't grasp or pinch utensils.
6. Cup with lid and straw can prevent spilling liquids from a cup when drinking.
7. Weighted cup will reduce spilling due to shaking.

Self-help utensils can be ordered through a medical supply company.

