

Dysphagia and Dementia:

As dementia and Alzheimer's Disease progresses in our patients, we often see patients struggle with their swallow. Here are some helpful tips to help your patients find success during meals.

Interventions (Bush, J., Slominiski T., Boczko F., 2006)

Some Useful Mealtime Strategies for Clients With AD:

- Offer environmental cues to signal the change from a recreational activity to eating
- Increase lighting and contrast at the table setting
- Use visual cues and written reminders
- Control noise, light glare, and odor
- Serve individuals promptly after they are seated
- Offer visual cuing for boundaries by using place mats or square tables to reduce interest in another's meal
- Decorate the dining room in a homelike manner to provide reassurance and environmental cues
- Supervise the meal, cue and encourage eating, use one-step directives
- Limit the number of utensils (usually people will choose the utensil closest to their dominant hand)
- Use cups with handles that are easy to grasp
- Serving larger portions for breakfast may help to maintain weight
- Increase the number of finger foods and provide foods "on the go"
- Clients often can be tempted to eat by adding sweeteners to food
- Serve one item at a time to decrease distractions and limit choices
- Provide ethnic or culturally appropriate foods
- Alternate hot and cold, add sweetener, and alternate with spicy foods, add ketchup, mustard, or salt and pepper (if medically appropriate)
- Tell concerned individuals that their meals are paid for, provide meal tickets or imitation money, or explain that it is included in a meal club
- Seat individuals according to compatibility rather than disabilities
- Offer liquids and water consistently throughout the day and place beverage stations in high traffic areas
- Repeat redirection to the task of eating meals and snacks
- Do not use garnishes or decorations that are not easily chewed
- Make small tables for one or two available for residents who perform better when eating alone or in a small group

For more information check out: <https://leader.pubs.asha.org/.../leader.FTR1.11072006.8>