

Positioning During Eating

Ideal positioning during eating

- Seated on a firm surface, such as the straight chair provided in the room
- Feet flat on the floor
- Equal weight bearing on both buttocks (not tilted to one side)
- Sitting up straight or slightly forward (exception: someone with hip precautions should not bend forward greater than 90 degrees)
- Able to rest both forearms on the table with elbow bent, without hiking at the shoulder or slouching to reach the tray
- Head upright, in midline (middle of the body) with chin slightly tucked down

Other tips

- If an individual needs to be in bed or in a recliner, try to follow the above guidelines. Use towels or pillows to help with proper positioning.
- If needed, food could be taken off the tray for better access for the individual.

- Use contrasting colors for the individual with low vision (i.e., white napkins and plates on a colored placemat, white milk in a black cup and black coffee in a light cup).
- Adaptive equipment, such as a plate guard or utensils with built up handles, may be appropriate.
- An Occupational Therapy consult for evaluation of feeding skills (physician order required) may be appropriate if an individual has:
 - Tremors
 - Observation of excessive spilling when the individual is in the ideal position
 - Severe arthritis
 - Difficulty reaching to bedside table for cup
 - Difficulty holding standard cup
 - Vision problems that interfere with eating
 - Patient reports problems with feeding him/herself
- A Speech Therapy consult for swallowing (physician order required) may be appropriate if an individual has:
 - Difficulty swallowing
 - Choking or coughing during eating
 - Pocketing of food
 - Unexplained elevated temperature
 - Cognitive issues related to eating

Sitting Positioning



Ideal



Not ideal

Bed Positioning



Ideal



Not ideal

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.