



Feeding Strategies for Behaviors Associated with Dementia

People with dementia often have behaviors that will affect eating and drinking. Here are suggested ways that caregivers might intervene to overcome feeding difficulties associated with dementia.

Behaviors	Feeding Strategies
Forgetting to eat, chew or swallow	Supervise closely and give verbal prompts to eat, chew, and swallow Provide physical prompts: hand over hand assistance Consider food texture changes (i.e. cut into small pieces) Use sensory cues that mealtime is soon such as the aroma of cookies or bread to stimulate appetite
Excessive chewing	Observe swallow for possible difficulty or pain Request speech/dental assessment for oral problems Give verbal prompts to swallow Offer small bites of food
Eating too quickly or slowly	Provide eating companions who eat at normal pace and encourage conversation Serve courses one at a time Do not rush the mealtime
Eating non-edible items	Remove inedible skins, pits, seeds, and shells from food items Remove toothpicks from sandwiches Remove nonedible objects from the table Provide finger foods
Refusal to go to the dining room	Identify reasons for refusal and offer solutions Provide favorite foods, small servings Offer extended dining hours and on-the-go foods

Behaviors	Feeding Strategies
Refusal to eat enough	<p>Offer small, frequent meals</p> <p>Offer fortified meal plan with nutrition-dense foods</p> <p>Offer high-calorie supplements at the end of meals and/or between meals</p> <p>Offer food at other times</p> <p>Offer verbal encouragement</p> <p>Re-obtain food preferences and include familiar foods in the menu</p>
Overeating	<p>Entertain the person with playful activities so they do not feel bored or lonely</p> <p>Divide the portion in two and offer the second one only if requested</p> <p>Fill most of the plate with salad or vegetables</p>
Wandering or pacing during meals	<p>Direct gently and firmly back to their table and to remain seated</p> <p>Schedule physical exercise a half hour before dining</p> <p>Provide nutritionally dense foods to ensure adequate energy</p> <p>Provide foods person can eat on-the-go</p>
Combativeness	<p>Modify the environment to eliminate possible triggers</p> <p>Provide adequate time for person to self-feed</p> <p>Offer finger foods</p> <p>Approach with calm, steady demeanor</p> <p>Sit on non-dominant side</p> <p>Use unbreakable dishes</p> <p>Give one food at a time</p>
Spitting	<p>Evaluate the oral cavity to assess for chewing ability</p> <p>Provide tissues to spit into and verbally cue for their use</p> <p>Place in separate dining area out of consideration for others</p>

Behaviors	Feeding Strategies
Hoarding food	Make sure food and drink is readily available for snacks Monitor type and amount of food hoarded Remove foods that are easily spoiled
Taking food from others	Supervise closely at mealtimes Request reevaluation of restricted diet Ensure placement of plates/bowls within eyesight
Paranoid fears about food	Acknowledge fears and attempt to calm them Consistent, structured eating routine Do not mix medications in food Serve food in sealed packages or wrapped up

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