

# Assisting with Feeding

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**PURPOSE:** Provide assistance to an individual who is unable to feed himself/herself.

**EQUIPMENT:**  Table and chair  
 Eating utensils

**ACTION:**

1. Make sure individual is positioned correctly for eating available use a chair that pulls close to the table.
2. Place a napkin over his/her chest to protect clothing, if necessary.
3. Serve finger foods such as sandwiches when possible.
4. Sometimes the only assistance an individual may need will be to cut up meats or open containers/packages. Always encourage individuals to eat as independently as possible.
5. When additional assistance is needed, feed the individual slowly, offering a liquid first to moisten the mouth. Offer solids by filling a spoon two-thirds full.
6. Touch the spoon to the individual's bottom lip to prompt them to open their mouth, and then touch the spoon to the tongue. Touching the lips and tongue lets the individual know where the spoon is in the mouth.
7. Allow time between bites for the individual to chew and swallow. Offer liquids after several swallows of solid food, making sure the liquids are not too hot.
8. End the meal with water to rinse the mouth and provide a napkin to allow the individual to wipe their mouth.

**REFERENCE:** The American National Red Cross, "Family Caregiving Program: Healthy Eating"; 2004.