

Aspiration Precautions

1. Watch the person you care for eat a meal. Look for signs of dysphagia, such as a wet sounding voice, coughing while eating, drooling, or gagging.
2. Wash your hands for 15 seconds before you begin to prepare food and feed the person.
3. Prepare foods recommended by the dietitian.
4. Have the person brush their teeth and rinse their mouth or provide denture care (see our lessons on **Mouth Care** and **Denture Care**).
5. Help the person sit up straight in a chair or in bed **at least 45 degrees**. If the person is limited in mobility, have them sit up as far as he or she can.
6. If the dietitian recommends it, add thickener to liquids.
7. Have the person assume a chin-tuck position by tucking the chin down toward the chest.
8. Have the person first try sips of water. Watch for swallowing problems at this time. Ask the person if they can breathe okay.
9. If the person has no problems, have them drink a larger amount of water followed by different consistencies of foods and liquids.
10. When you feed the person, place $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of food on their unaffected side of mouth (side where sensation and movement are normal). Let the fork or spoon touch the mouth or tongue.
11. Verbally coach while feeding the person. Remind him or her to chew and think about swallowing.
12. During the meal, observe for coughing, choking, gagging, and drooling. **Stop feeding if the person has any of these problems.**
13. Do not rush the person while eating. Allow time for chewing and swallowing.
14. Alternate solids and sips of liquids during the meal. Give the person a chance to rest after several bites.
15. Then have the person open the mouth and look to see if they pocket food in their mouth. You might want to use a small flash light and tongue blade to check.
16. If the person has dementia, show them how to chew and swallow as you feed them.
17. Have the person sit up straight for at least 30 minutes after a meal.
18. After the meal, have the person brush and rinse their teeth or dentures. Assist as needed.
19. Wash your hands and store away supplies.



Heimlich Maneuver

If a person begins to choke and has trouble breathing and/or cannot make sounds, try to get the food out of their mouth and call 911 immediately. While waiting for emergency services perform the Heimlich Maneuver:

1. Only use the maneuver on conscious adults and children over the age of 1. Do not use for infants under age 1.
2. Stand or kneel behind the person choking.
3. Wrap your arms around their waist.
4. If the person is standing, place one of your legs between his or her legs so you can support the person if he or she faints.
5. Make a fist with your strong or dominant hand.
6. Place the thumb side of your fist against the person's belly, just above the belly button but well below the breastbone.
7. Grasp your fist with the other hand. Give a quick upward thrust up into the belly. This may cause the person to cough and push the food out.
8. Use more force for a large person and less force for a child or small adult
9. You may need to do the maneuver again until the food pops out of the mouth or the person faints.
10. Stay with the person until emergency responders arrive.

