



# Meal Time



Loss of interest in food is common for those with dementia, and this can be stressful for families and caregivers. Below are some important tips to help provide support related to appetite.

## Plan ahead:

### Know the person's preferences

- **Support patterns:** Consider what time and where the person is used to eating.
  - Have they always eaten a large breakfast at 10? Do they prefer a light dinner?
  - Do they prefer to eat at the table? Couch? Den? Bed?
- **Minimize your own stress:** Plan/prepare simple meals ahead of time and consider having a few options ready.

## Create the right environment:

### Engage the senses to stimulate appetite

- **Smell:** Work up the appetite by preparing the meal together, smelling spices and fresh herbs.
- **Sound:** Play your elder's favorite music while eating (but do ensure the music is mood-appropriate).
- **Sight:** Be sure the food looks appetizing by ensuring the different items on the plate are easy to see. Try placing flowers on the table, or using a nice table cloth to create ambiance.

## Address the obstacles:

### Identify possible reasons for meal refusal and resolve the issue

- Note favorite and least favorite foods, and accommodate meals to taste.
- Is the person able to manage the food on the plate? Try smaller portions, or cutting food into manageable bites prior to serving.
- Explore adaptive dining options such as bendable or easy-grip utensils.
- Consider sharing meals together to ensure a natural and social feeling.

## Reassure:

### Remind your elder that meal time is enjoyable

- Describe the food items and compliment their appearance, aroma, taste.
- Be present during meal time, engage in friendly conversation and create a comfortable dining experience.

## Stay confident:

If food is refused at first, simply try again in a few minutes as if it is the first offer

## Seek advice:

Always remember that you have the Seniors At Home team to support you—just ask!

**Contact Seniors At Home's Center for Dementia Care**  
Call 415-449-3700, email [dementiacare@jfcs.org](mailto:dementiacare@jfcs.org) or visit [seniorsathome.org](http://seniorsathome.org)