Make Feeding Safer

Over 50% of the residents in your home have swallowing or feeding problems. People with stroke are at increased risk of swallowing problems.

Those with swallowing problems are at risk of:
- pneumonia
- malnutrition
- dehydration
- weight loss
- social isolation

What to listen for
- Wet, gurgly or phlegmy sounding voice
- Throat-clearing
- Coughing or choking
- Resident complaining of:
  - a ‘lump in my throat’
  - throat ‘feels tight’
  - something ‘sticking in my throat’
  - heartburn

What to look for
- Pocketing food or medication in mouth or cheek
- Spitting out food
- Drooling
- Problems chewing
- Repetitive swallowing
- Shortness of breath after meals
- Taking longer to eat
- Losing interest in food or leaving food on plate
- Feeling anxious about meal times

If you notice a change in a resident’s eating or swallowing, it should be reported to the team.
Keys to Successful Feeding

- Oral care before and after eating
- Minimize distractions
- Make sure resident is sitting up at 60° to 90° angle and that the resident’s head is not tipped back
- Position yourself at eye level
- Get resident up in chair to eat whenever possible
- Use assistive devices when required
- One type of food at a time
- Cue to look at whole plate if food is being missed
- Give one level teaspoonful of food or fluid at a time
- Check for complete swallowing after each spoonful
- Remind resident to keep swallowing, cough to clear throat and use tongue to clear food
- Check if food is left in mouth

Food for thought

- Encourage residents to accept the food textures. Be positive. What you say does make a difference
- Special diet textures include pureed and minced foods
- Popsicles, ice cream, liquid supplements and milkshakes are not considered thickened fluids
**Oral Care**

**DO...**
- Provide oral care **before** and after meals, each morning and at bedtime
- Provide assistance with brushing mouth, teeth and dentures
- Check for **pocketing** of food and medications
- Use a **soft** toothbrush

**STOP**
- Oral swabs because they do not clean the mouth properly
- Alcohol-based mouthwashes as they dry and irritate the mouth
- Toothpaste or mouthwash if resident is at risk of aspiration

**GO**

*A clean mouth and teeth are essential to comfort and good health. Gum disease, bacteria and particles in the mouth can lead to stroke, heart disease, pneumonia, and infections.*

*If you notice a change in a resident’s eating or swallowing, it should be reported to the team*

**STROKE NETWORK of Southeastern Ontario**

*For More Information Go To: Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada (2015) Taking Action for Optimal Community and Long Term Stroke Care (TACLS) [Link]*