

Assistive Devices for Mealtimes

Consumers who have difficulties feeding or drinking independently typically want to do so.

The following is a list of five types of products that can help with independence at mealtimes:

1. Adapted Plates and Bowls

Adaptive plates and bowls are designed to make dining easier by reducing the amount of effort it takes to gather and consume food. Food often refuses to stay on the plate; plates and bowls slide around; and food gets mixed up within the plate. These problems can be solved with adaptive dinnerware.

Scooper bowls have partial lips around the rim to prevent food from sliding off. In addition, a wide variety of bumpers, guards, and lips are available that slip or clip onto nearly any type of plate to perform the same function as the scooper plates.

2. Non-Skid Plates and Bowls

A good companion to the scoopers and plate guards are non-skid plates that help keep the plate and bowl from moving under the force of the eating utensils. There are several different products such as mats, suction bases, and gripper feet.

Mats and gripper feet provide a good margin of safety, employing a very “grippy” (but not at all sticky) non-slip material to keep sliding plates and bowls to a minimum. If hand tremors are an issue, the only true way to actually adhere a plate or bowl to a table is suction-based bowls and plates that will not move at all.

3. Weighted Utensils

Weighted utensils can be very valuable if the consumer has problems with hand tremors. Weighted knives, forks, and spoons are available which help hold trembling hands steady when eating. A consumer’s own set of utensils can be inserted into weighted holders that have a variety of functions – they can even be used for razors and toothbrushes.

4. Utensil Holders for Better Grip

Utensils can be hard to grip for any period of time. To assist consumers who cannot grip spoons, knives, and forks, there are clips and straps. Most of these holders are so efficient that no finger strength at all is needed; the hand and the holder alone do the work.

For consumers who can hold utensils but have a problem with grip, foam handles can be inserted to “fatten up” the handles to provide a sure grip. There are also ergonomically-shaped plastic holders that easily slip on and off. All clips, straps, and holders are so portable and easy to manage that they can be taken on the road and used with restaurant utensils.

5. Specialized and Automated Feeding Devices

Specialized and automated feeding devices enable consumers with complex needs to become independent eaters. With a simple movement, feeding devices provide clean, convenient, independent eating. These devices provide solutions for complex challenges related to self-feeding caused by motor problems. For consumers with limited arm function, dynamic arm support feeding devices are often successful. In the case of coordination problems, the use of a mechanical arm that reduces the effects of tremor is common.