

MEALTIME AND KITCHEN HACKS *for aging*



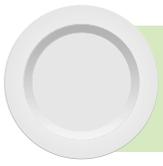
Mealtimes should be enjoyable at every age, but many older adults and people with disabilities experience physical changes that can make preparing and eating food more difficult. Tremors, arthritis, vision problems, and reduced ability to grasp are just a few of the common challenges. Read below for some inexpensive ideas and tips to help you or a loved one remain as independent as possible and to keep mealtimes safe, comfortable and enjoyable for everyone.



HACK YOUR FORKS, KNIVES AND SPOONS

Some individuals develop reduced mobility in hands and wrists that can make holding utensils frustrating and uncomfortable. Consider some of the following options.

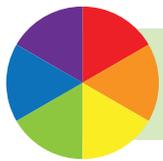
- **Rubber foam tubing:** Cover handles of utensils with rubber foam tubing, available in many different colors and sizes at local hardware stores. This tubing is more comfortable for hands, increases the size of handles, and can be put on many household items.
- **Rocking knives:** A regular knife uses forward motion that can cause both the food and knife to slip. A rocking knife, with a specially designed curved blade, can be managed with one hand using pressure from above and is safer and more comfortable to use.
- **Weighted utensils:** Heavier utensils help reduce hand and arm tremors while eating. The extra weight provides stability for the spoon and fork.
- **Bendable utensils:** When using a spoon or fork, we often bend the wrist to aim food toward the mouth. If this action is difficult, look for utensils that bend. Many of these can be bent at the angle that is most useful for the person eating.



HOW TO FIX SLIDING PLATES AND UNSTABLE ITEMS

While using forks and spoons, it is common to scoop the food against the plate's surfaces. This action becomes increasingly difficult with some conditions, and especially if the plate or food slide around. Here are a few simple solutions that address this:

- **Non-slip mats:** Use these beneath plates, cutting boards and on frequently used surfaces. This increases safety and reduces frustration when objects slide. Hack tip: Shelf liners can be a low-cost option.
- **Hi-Low plates:** These plates have a raised rim that is like the rim of a bowl. The higher rim provides a surface to help when scooping food. For individuals who have reduced strength to raise the fork from the plate quickly, the 'low' rim on the opposite side of the plate provides an easier route to access and remove food from the plate.
- **Food guards and/or partitioned plates:** These also are inexpensive options to help scoop food onto a utensil. Food guards snap onto plates and create a high wall from which to scoop. Partitioned plates have several dividers built within the plate and come in different sizes and depths.



USE COLOR IN THE KITCHEN

Vision changes can impact one's ability to navigate the kitchen comfortably and safely. Here are a few simple, practical tips:

- **Use color-coding on bottles to identify products of similar shape.** This works well for bottles that are often used. For safety, assign a color to keep cleaning supplies separate. In the bathroom, color coding can be used to differentiate shampoo from conditioner or body wash.
- **Fine details printed on stove and oven knobs can be difficult to discern, particularly on older appliances.** Use colored, puffy paint to clearly mark the 'off' position. Puffy paint can be seen and felt, which provides extra assurance that heat sources are turned fully off.



HACK YOUR KITCHEN FOR ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY

Take time to do a kitchen re-set, and invite friends or family members to help. Even simple changes can make working in the kitchen safer and more enjoyable.

- Place frequently used items in easy-to-reach places.
- Move heavy appliances out of very low or very high cabinets. Store on the counter or in an easy-to-reach cupboard without bending over.
- Consider moving an over-the-stovetop microwave to counter height or a safer, accessible location. Removing hot items from an overhead microwave can result in spills and burns.
- Make a cleaning schedule. Food-borne illnesses are dangerous for individuals who are older or who are immuno-compromised. Keep surfaces, sinks and the refrigerator clean and sanitized for daily use.
- If the budget allows, consider changing turn-style kitchen faucets to levers. These are easier to use for individuals with arthritis or reduced grip strength.
- Rather than leaning over the hot stove to monitor pots and pans, consider securing a non-fog mirror above the stove.