

Eating Out with Parkinson's

Use this tip sheet as a prompt for questions you may have when eating out at a new café or restaurant.

Location and Environment

The layout and environment of a restaurant or café may significantly impact your comfort, mobility and enjoyment of the dining experience.

Accessibility

- Is there easy access to the entrance and amenities?
- Are there steps to navigate?
- Is there sufficient circulation space between tables?
- Is the venue wheelchair or walker friendly?

Seating

- Is there good space to easily sit down?
- Are chairs with arms available?

Acoustics

- Is the venue noisy, crowded and distracting?
- Is it easy to be heard and does it allow you to concentrate easily when eating and drinking?
- Is there a quieter table available in the restaurant or café?

Location

- Is the venue's location easy to access by car or public transport?
- Is parking available close-by?
- Do you have to walk far or over uneven surfaces?

Menu

- Can you view the menu online to familiarise yourself with available options and plan your selection?

Swallowing Safety

Implement strategies for effective and safe eating and drinking. Be clear on what types of drinks or food textures are safe and comfortable for you.

- Bring your own modified cutlery and utensils if necessary.
- Softer, moist foods can be less demanding, making them easier to chew effectively and swallow safely.
- Avoid rushing. Take small sips and cut up food into smaller pieces to make it easier to manipulate in your mouth.
- If it takes you longer to finish a meal, ask to be served first or order an entrée instead of a main course
- Avoid distractions or talking at the same time as eating. When your attention is focused on conversation or a distraction your swallowing skills may be compromised.
- If you've been recommended to have easy to chew food, choose something from the menu that meets this description such as a risotto.
- If you are on pureed food, opt for menu options such as a pumpkin soup. You may find the restaurant can modify the dish to be softer, minced or even pureed.

If you have any concerns about eating or drinking, you should see a Speech Pathologist for assessment and advice on swallowing management specific to your individual needs.

The Fight Parkinson's Health Team can help with any questions around eating out and swallowing. They can also provide information on speech pathologists who work with people with Parkinson's and Atypical Parkinson's. Call 1800 644 189.