

Feeding Guidelines: Ensuring Safe Eating for Patients

I. Preparation Before Feeding: Alert and Proper Positioning

- **Ensure alertness:** Talk to the patient before feeding. If the patient is drowsy or not fully alert, **do not feed**, as food may enter the airway.
 - **Oral hygiene:** Clean the mouth before feeding. A clean oral cavity reduces the risk of bacteria entering the lungs and causing pneumonia, even if choking occurs.
 - **Proper posture:** Maintain an upright position (approximately 90°).
 - ★ **Never feed while lying down or with the head tilted back.** If the patient cannot keep their head upright, place a small pillow behind the head to keep the neck at a 90° angle.
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II. Monitoring During Feeding: Small Bites, Slow Swallowing

- **Follow professional dietary recommendations:** Only provide foods approved by the speech therapist (e.g., liquid, puree, or semi-solid). Food consistency should be as uniform as possible.
 - **Feed slowly in small amounts:** Use a small spoon; offer only half to one spoonful at a time.
 - **Check for complete swallowing:**
 1. **Observe the neck:** Look for one upward and downward movement of the throat.
 2. **Listen to the voice:** Ask the patient to say “ah” after swallowing. If the voice sounds wet or gurgly (like mucus), do not give the next bite.
 3. **Check the mouth:** Regularly inspect both sides of the cheeks for food residue.
 - **Quiet environment:** Turn off the TV and avoid conversation so the patient can focus on swallowing.
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III. !!!!! Warning Signs !!!!!: Stop Feeding Immediately

During or after feeding, **stop immediately and notify medical staff** if any of the following occur:

- **Breathing difficulty:** Sudden rapid or labored breathing
 - **Oxygen desaturation:** If using a pulse oximeter, oxygen saturation drops below 90%
 - **Change in skin color:** Bluish or purplish discoloration of the face
 - **Persistent coughing:** Continuous coughing when eating or drinking, or a sudden increase in phlegm
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IV. Post-Feeding Care: Clean the Mouth, Stay Upright

- **Oral care again:** After eating, check and clean any remaining food from the mouth
 - **Maintain upright position:** Keep the patient seated at a 60°–90° angle for **at least 1 hour**
 - ★ **Important:** Never lie down immediately after eating to prevent reflux and aspiration
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💡 Reminder for Caregivers and Family

Swallowing therapy is a team effort. Your care is crucial to the patient’s recovery. Maintain communication with speech therapists and healthcare professionals.

If you have any questions about swallowing management, **ask and discuss**—do not independently feed or modify food consistency.