



Dining Outdoors: Stay Safe During the Summer



Fresh food, picnics, and eating out are part of summer fun! When supporting someone during meals away from home, keep these important safety tips in mind.

FOLLOW THE USUAL DINING GUIDELINES

- Know and follow the person's written individualized dining protocols, even when eating out.
- Use the same protocol they follow at home, such as food texture, portion size, or pacing.
- Make sure food is prepared safely (for example, cut or modified as needed).

WATCH FOR ALLERGIES AND SPECIAL DIETS

- Be aware of all food allergies and dietary needs.
- Summer foods may be different from daily meals, so double-check ingredients.
- Never assume a food is safe—confirm first.

PROVIDE REMINDERS ABOUT DINING SUPPORT NEEDS

- Review dining guidelines with the individual and the people supporting them.
- Tell family members, friends, and event hosts about food allergies or individualized supports.
- Make sure everyone understands what items are safe or unsafe for a person and why.
- Discuss special food preparation needs.

BRING SAFE FOOD OPTIONS

- Consider bringing approved foods to picnics or cookouts.
- Common summer foods like sandwiches, peanut butter, hot dogs, hamburgers, and marshmallows may not be safe for everyone.
- Do not thicken liquids before the event; liquids must be thickened at the time of use and remade after 30 minutes.
- Pureed food may thicken as food sits.
- Be sure to perform the IDDSI texture tests prior to serving (<https://www.iddsi.org/videos>).
- Consider a travel blender to modify texture.
- Having safe food available helps prevent choking.

BE SAFE WITH FOOD

- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- Do not leave food out in the sun.
- Ensure food is securely stored during transport, before and after serving.
- Monitor and confirm people receive and have access to only appropriate food and drink.
- Proper food temperature helps prevent food poisoning.

WATCH FOR NEW OR UNUSUAL REACTIONS

- Pay attention when someone tries a new food.
- If symptoms such as hives, swelling, or stomach pain occur, follow the appropriate medication or emergency procedure protocol.
- Document event and report it right away.

ENCOURAGE SITTING WHILE EATING

- Always follow the positioning recommendations stated in the dining guidelines.
- Eating while standing or walking increases the risk of choking.
- Sitting makes it easier to notice signs of trouble.

SUPERVISE MEALS CLOSELY

- Stay alert during meals and snacks.
- Watch for signs of choking or difficulty swallowing (see CPR training for additional information).
- Know emergency procedures and be ready to act if needed.
- Have someone call 911 if the person shows signs of choking and follow emergency procedures.

CALL 911 FOR EMERGENCIES

IF YOU THINK SWALLOWING IS A PROBLEM:

- Write down exactly what you see.
- Stop the meal and tell the nurse and your supervisor right away.
- Make sure the doctor is informed and knows what you observed.