

Dementia & Eating Refusal Cheatsheet

Getting Them to Eat Feels Harder Than It Needs Because You Are:

1. Trying to get them to listen to you
2. Wanting them to do things your way
3. Feeling anxious that their not eating will harm their health—or make you feel like a “bad” caregiver
4. Stressed and overwhelmed

By the End of This Cheatsheet You'll:

1. Know why they are refusing to eat
2. Learn how to adapt meals and mealtimes to ensure they get what they need

Top 3 Reasons Why They Refuse to Eat

- 1) Confusion
- 2) Overwhelm
- 3) Sensory Issues

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1. CONFUSION WITH EATING

1. Time: “I already ate”
2. Not connecting hunger cues with eating: “I’m not hungry”
3. Lack of focus or too much happening at meal time : “I’m busy, I’ll eat later”
4. Tired: “Not right now”
5. Not remembering how to use utensils

2. OVERWHELM WITH EATING

1. Too many steps/getting lost
2. Emotions are too high
3. Too unfamiliar/out of routine
4. Too much food on the plate
5. Too many kinds of food on the plate
6. Too much talking/distractions at meal time

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3. SENSORY ISSUES (PART 2)

1. Pain
2. Issues with texture (mouth, throat, food & skin)
3. Sensitivity to cold (#1 reason for shower refusals)
4. Increased/decreased sensitivity
5. Slower processing time
6. Issues seeing foods against the same color plate

HOW TO OVERCOME EATING REFUSALS:

1. Buy adaptive silverware ([link here](#)).
2. Buy a red plate ([link here](#)).
3. Make sure dentures fit well
4. Make sure there are no cuts or sores in their mouth
5. Keep their eating area simple with few distractions
6. Serve familiar foods (or serve them in familiar containers like their favorite fast food containers)
7. Give them finger foods