


# Dining with Dignity

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## Healthy Ageing Tasmania

 [health.tas.gov.au/healthy-ageing](https://health.tas.gov.au/healthy-ageing)

 [community.nutrition@health.tas.gov.au](mailto:community.nutrition@health.tas.gov.au)

*Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.  
Visit the Department of Health website ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)) for more information.*

The Healthy Ageing Tasmania Team acknowledge the palawa/pakana people as the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of Lutruwita (Tasmania).

We recognise the strength and resilience of all First Nations people and their care and protection of country and community for thousands of years. Aboriginal people demonstrate deep respect and value for their elders and their communities. First Nations people have been story telling for more than 65,000 years, and we proudly pay tribute to their culture when we share stories and connect with our ageing community.

In the spirit of reconciliation, I extend my respect to Tasmanian Aboriginal people and Elders past and present and acknowledge that their land was never ceded.



# Today we will cover

- How dignity and independence can impact our food choices.
- How you can help improve dignity and food choices.
- Resources.



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# Food is how we express ourselves.

**Food is a very personal thing.**

As children we are learning about food.

As adults we choose foods that we enjoy and meet our needs.

Food is a part of our identity.

As we age, we can lose our food independence.

**Losing independence with food can affect how well we eat.**



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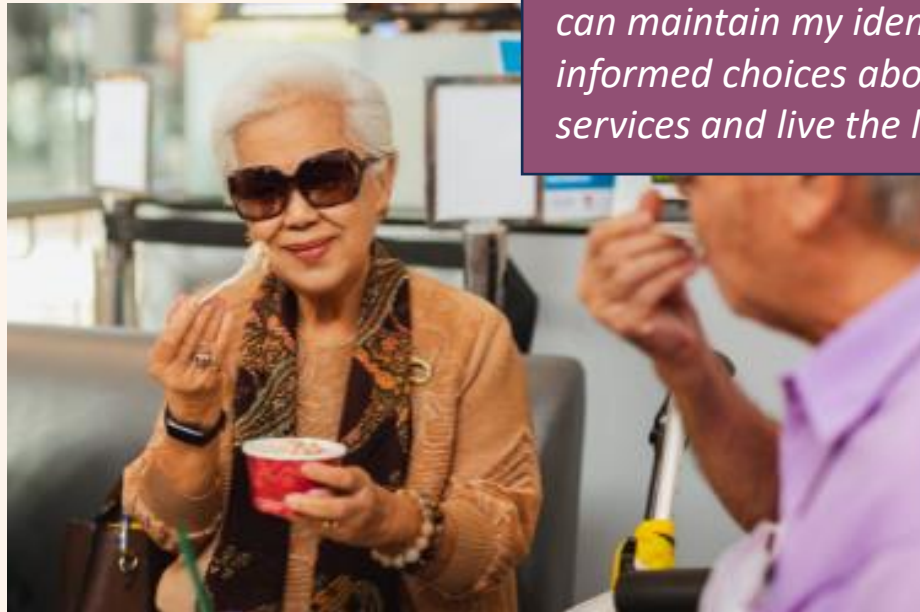
# The importance of autonomy and dignity.

## Everyone has the right to choose

We often talk about making informed choices in care, this applies to eating too. Allowing and encouraging people to choose can help them to enjoy mealtimes.

Everyone has the right to choose:

- when and where to eat
- who you eat with
- what you eat and drink
- how much you eat and drink
- how you eat and drink.



### Standard 1: Consumer dignity and choice

*"I am treated with dignity and respect and can maintain my identity. I can make informed choices about my care and services and live the life I choose."*



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**How can you help  
your clients to eat  
well?**

# How to help an older person gain their independence back.

## Try these ideas:

- Offer a variety of choices.
- If they have had taste changes, offer new foods alongside an old favourite.
- Consider assistive cutlery.
- Serve favourite foods that are softer to chew and easier to swallow.
- Find new ways to make their favourite foods easier to eat.
- Try finger foods if cutlery isn't appropriate.
- Shop with them online, or in the store, to allow them to choose.

**Simple changes can help an older person to eat with dignity.**



# If eating is difficult.

## These tips can make eating easier:

- Choose soft, moist foods.
- Add minced meat, eggs or legumes in casseroles and stews. Avoid chewy meats.
- Be careful of sticky, dry or crunchy foods as they may cause choking.
- Try adapted cups and lightweight cutlery.
- Place a non-slip placemat under the plate.

### NOTE:

An assessment by a speech pathologist may be needed.



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# Meet Maureen

*\*Name has been changed for privacy*

- 91 years old, and lives independently at home.
- Loves roast vegetables and roast meat, it was a Sunday tradition.
- Stopped cooking roasts when she needed to use her walking aid.
- The roasting pan was too heavy to lift out of the oven, balance on the walker, and then lift to the bench.
- Purchased an air fryer.
- Now Maureen can cook her favourite Sunday Roasts.
- She has regained independence and is enjoying cooking again.





**Where can I go for  
more  
information?**

# Resources and support.

[www.health.tas.gov.au/healthy-ageing](http://www.health.tas.gov.au/healthy-ageing)

- Nutrition for older people online training
- Malnutrition in older people online training
- Fact sheets to support eating well



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• reduce risk of burns by making sure food is not too hot  
• an alarm clock or phone call could be used to remind you

**Choose enjoyable food options**  
You are more likely to eat enough when you like the food available.

- use familiar foods - cook and present them in familiar ways
- choose bright, colourful food that looks and smells appealing
- prepare foods that are easy to eat with your hands
- try some new dishes if usual favourites are not being enjoyed
- choose sweet foods from the five food groups (like your favourite).

**If cooking is difficult**  
If preparing meals has become challenging, here are some ideas:

- Buy pre-prepared meals from the supermarket.
- Ask a support person (a family member or friend) to help with meal preparation.
- Arrange home delivered meals from meal services.
- Access home support services to help with meal preparation.
- Choose a comfortable, familiar venue when eating out.
- Keep snacks that are easy to eat and don't require a lot of preparation.

**If eating is difficult**  
Eating food can become challenging for people living with a sore mouth.

- Soft, moist foods may be easier to eat.
- Add minced meat, eggs or legumes in casseroles.
- Be careful of sticky, dry or crunchy foods.

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**What to eat if your mouth is sore.**  
If you have mouth pain or have had your teeth removed, soft moist foods can make eating feel less painful. Soft and moist foods are also useful if you are having trouble chewing, have loose fitting dentures or have a dry mouth.

**Eat a range of soft foods from the five food groups**  
Make meals and snacks with foods from the five food groups. By eating a variety of foods your body will get all of the nutrients it needs. Below are some ideas for soft moist foods.

Food group	Examples
Meat and alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meats that are coarsely minced, slow cooked or served with a sauce (like bolognese) or in a casserole are easier to eat.</li><li>• Try egg dishes like scrambled eggs or quiches.</li><li>• Steamed or poached fresh fish or tinned fish.</li><li>• Add beans and lentils (well-cooked so the outer skin is soft) to meals, for example chickpeas or brown lentils.</li></ul>
Dairy and alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try milk, milkshakes, and smoothies.</li><li>• Have yoghurt or custard as a snack or serve with foods like soft fruit or cake.</li><li>• Add grated cheese to meals.</li></ul>
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cook vegetables well so they are easily chewed or mashed with a fork.</li><li>• Add soft canned vegetables to meals.</li><li>• Mash potatoes or cook in a potato bake with cream and cheese.</li><li>• Add beans and lentils (well-cooked so the outer skin is soft) to meals.</li></ul>
Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eat soft fresh fruit like bananas that can be easily mashed.</li><li>• Stew fruits in small pieces or eat soft canned fruit.</li></ul>
Grain (cereal) foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Try eating breakfast cereals soaked in milk.</li><li>• Make soft sandwiches without crusts, seeds, or hard grains.</li><li>• Add well cooked rice or couscous to main meals.</li><li>• Cook pasta and noodles until they are soft.</li></ul>



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# Summary

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- Losing our independence, dignity and choice can affect how well we eat.
- Eating well is essential for the wellbeing of older people.
- By improving how we eat, we can improve what we eat.
- The Healthy Ageing Tasmania team is here to support Tasmanian service providers.



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