

Dining Out

Dining out is an event that many people enjoy. Whether you regularly get together with friends, or meet with your family for weekly dinners, meals outside the home can be an important occasion. However, dining out with someone with memory problems can sometimes be a challenge.

Common problems are choosing from the menu, paying the bill, and not being sure of how to eat certain dishes in this different environment. Some may find it hard to stay seated for the entire meal, may be distracted by noise or the other patrons, or become upset with the different environment. Some of these changes can be overcome by planning ahead.

To support a successful eating out event, try these simple tips:

- **Go to quiet, small restaurants**, where there are fewer distractions of noise or too many other people. If possible, find one with easy access to washrooms and lots of free space to get up. It may be easier to get up, stretch your legs and take a break from the meal at a more informal restaurant.
- **Consider leaving young children at home** if noise is an issue, or have family gatherings at home.
- **Go at off-times**, such as early evening or midafternoon. The restaurants will be less crowded at these times, and less noisy.
- **Go to a favourite restaurant**, where things are familiar. Familiar places are comforting and food choices are easier.
- **Call ahead and make a reservation.** Tell the staff that one of the people coming has memory problems. This can help the staff better serve you, and make the meal run more smoothly.
- **Use the washroom** before leaving home.
- **Talk about eating out ahead of time.** It may not be remembered, but it is important not to be surprised just before leaving, and risk being upset.
- **Look over the menu and narrow food choices** to a couple of favourites. Look for favourite ingredients to help make a decision.

As time progresses, dining out can become more difficult for people with memory problems. Some advance planning can make the experience more enjoyable for all.