

# Eating Non-Edibles

People with memory problems may have trouble recognizing that some things shouldn't be eaten. It is common for people to confuse small items for food. This can be dangerous, because it can lead to choking and problems breathing. Eating food wrapping, napkins, disposable plates or cups can be upsetting but can easily be prevented.

To help make the person maintain their dignity at mealtimes, you can:

- **Remove all non-edibles** from the dinner table, such as candles or cloth napkins. This focuses attention on the food provided, rather than other non-food items.
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- **Use unbreakable china plates** instead of disposable ones, and ensure that all the wrapping is off of food.
- **Put out the exact number of utensils**, to avoid distraction with extra objects.
- **Season meals in the kitchen**, so that the salt and pepper shakers, spice, or condiment containers will not be distracting during the meal.
- **Eat meals slowly**, concentrating on the food and being full.
- **Choose cutlery that is safe to bite down on.** Avoid sharp knives and flimsy plastic utensils which can break if chewed on.
- **Leave flowers off the table**, or only have edible flowers, such as nasturtiums around.

**People with memory problems may get confused about what to eat. Remembering that this is not their choice and making some simple changes to the eating environment can help all to eat enjoyably.**