

# Scenario: Mealtimes 2 - Cutlery & Containers

People with dementia may experience difficulties with their fine motor skills and coordination, reducing the functional ability of their hands. This can impact a person's quality of life and interfere with activities of daily living such as eating meals. As a result, people with dementia may lose some of the fine motor skills required to open food containers and get food from a plate into the mouth. In turn, people may require different levels of support during meal times as their dementia progresses.

## Aims



The aim of this training scenario is to simulate a reduction in the functional ability of the hands and how this can interfere with the daily activity of eating meals.

## Learning Objectives



- Increase people's awareness of the motor symptoms associated with different types of dementia and how this can interfere with daily activities
- Increase people's empathy towards people with dementia
- Recognise the effect of the dining environment on people with dementia
- Develop dementia-friendly dining environments

## When to use this scenario



This scenario can be used in introductory dementia care training courses to understand the impact of motor symptoms and demonstrate how best to support people with dementia during meal times. This scenario is only suitable for in-person training.

## Equipment



- Food containers e.g. jars, lunch boxes, etc.
- Bottle of water with a cap
- Cutlery
- Plates of food that require different cutlery e.g. sweetcorn, spaghetti, soup, chicken (or alternative food that can be cut up).
- A pair of Cambridge simulation gloves (the number of pairs needed will depend on group size)

## Downloadable supporting materials



- Slide deck
- Evaluation form
- Motor symptoms information sheet

## Facilitation Instructions



### Setting up:

- Prepare a mix of foods that require different types and methods of using cutlery e.g. cut up chicken fillet using a knife and fork, twist spaghetti around a fork, and eat soup with a spoon.
- Before presenting the activity, set up different tables with different plates of food along with the required cutlery, a food container, a bottle of water, and a pair of Cambridge simulation gloves.

## Facilitation Instructions

### Briefing:

Prior to starting the activity, please brief the participants on the intent of the simulation. For example, you may say to them:



*“People with dementia may lose some of the hand motor skills required during meal times such as the ability to open food containers and get food from a plate into their mouth. As a result, people with dementia may require different levels of support to eat meals. This activity simulates reduced function in the hands and how this impacts meal times. During the activity you will put yourself in the shoe’s of a person with dementia. It is also really important to note that this simulation will not reflect every person’s experience of living with dementia”.*



15 minutes

## Activity Instructions



1. Arrange multiple tables as described in the set-up section.
2. At each table the participant will wear simulation gloves while attempting to use the cutlery provided to pick up food from the plate/bowl.
3. The participant is then asked to open the food container and bottle of water.

## Helpful Tips



- If you don't have access to the Cambridge simulation gloves tape your index finger to your thumb to simulate reduced functional ability in the hands.
- This activity can be combined with the Mealtimes: Plates scenario. Try wearing the simulation glasses and simulation gloves to pick up food presented on contrasting and similar colored plates

## Group Reflection / Discussion



1. Following the activity, take some time to reflect on individuals' experiences.
2. Have a group discussion on how one might support a person with dementia during meal times:
  - Discuss the different levels of support that can be used to support a person with dementia during meal times: gentle reminders on how to hold cutlery, placing cutlery in a person's hands, providing hand-over/under-hand support etc.
  - It's important to promote a person-centred approach to care and adjust the level of support depending on the person's needs. This also means taking into account the person's mood and preferences e.g. a person might prefer to eat foods in a particular order or may need more support during certain times of the day due to tiredness.

## Additional Resources



- Useful tips for people caring for someone with dementia who is experiencing problems with eating [https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-CaringForSomeone12-Eating\\_english.pdf](https://www.dementia.org.au/sites/default/files/helpsheets/Helpsheet-CaringForSomeone12-Eating_english.pdf)
- YouTube video with mealtime tips <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tujTZK0s804>