

Eating Tips for the Sight Impaired

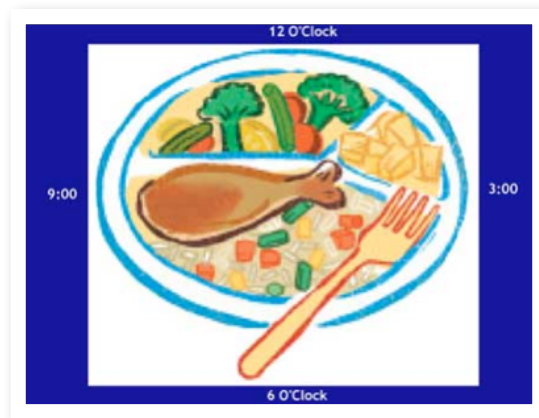
Employing a few special techniques at the table can enhance the independence of the sight impaired.

Clock Reference System

One way to tell what food is on the plate is to use the clock reference system. Think of the plate as a clock face with:

- 12:00 at the top (the edge that is farthest away from the person eating)
- 6:00 at the bottom (the edge that is closest to the person eating)

This reference system can help form a mental picture of where each food item is located on the plate:



Additional Eating Skills and Tips

Plate and placement

- Use a tray or placemat to help maintain orientation to the place setting.
- A food bumper helps keep food on the plate.



- Use the fork and the tip of the knife to periodically check the location and arrangement of the food on the plate.
- To locate the beverage on the table, slide a hand across the tabletop to find the glass and pick it up from the bottom to keep it from tipping over.
- To return an item such as a salt shaker, butter dish or cup to the table, use one hand to locate a free space on the table top and the other hand to hold the item that you're returning to that space. Keep your hand on the table top until the item has been placed back onto the table.

Cutting food

- Identify the cutting edge of the knife blade by rocking the knife blade forward and backward on the table top to determine when the cutting edge (which will rock) is facing downward.
- Locate one edge of the meat with the knife and hold the knife there. Then put a fork into the meat about a half inch from the edge and, starting at the edge, cut a small semicircle with the knife around the fork to cut a bite-sized piece.
- When scooping with a fork, press the tines down into and under the food to feel a "dragging" sensation if the food item is not fully cut and severed from the main piece.

Seasoning food

- Identify salt and pepper by weight or feel; salt is generally heavier and makes a looser, more granular sound when poured.
- Instead of shaking salt or pepper directly onto the meal, shake it into a palm, then take a pinch and sprinkle it to taste.
- Adapt this technique to condiments like ketchup and mustard by putting them to one side of the plate rather than directly onto the food.

Continuum Care's caregivers are trained in gently encouraging and providing specialized care for those with vision loss. We can provide just the right in-home caregiver to provide as much care as needed for the situation and foster independence whenever possible.

Sources: American Federation for the Blind, VisionAware