

preschool pack

Mealtimes

For all children, sharing morning tea or lunch provides an important opportunity for socialising. Many children with cerebral palsy can eat independently. Others will have varying degrees of difficulty, while some may be completely dependent.¹

Some children may show difficulties with chewing and swallowing food and drink. They may involuntarily bite on a spoon and may not be able to use their lips to get the food from the spoon. Sometimes, their tongue may protrude when swallowing food and drink.

Ideas to consider:

- All children should experience the opportunity to be part of the group and follow the same mealtime routine.
- Where possible, children should be seated with the group at the same height as their peers.
- Some children with cerebral palsy may need more time to complete their meal regardless of the amount of assistance required.
- It is important for a child who has difficulty with eating to be seated well with good posture and balance.
- If a child has difficulty swallowing ensure that his/her head is forward and in the midline with the chin slightly down. This may reduce the risk of food or drink going down the wrong way.
- Adapted cups or cutlery may be useful.
- At the end of the meal ensure that the child has finished all that is in his/her mouth before moving onto another activity or rest time.

¹. *Let's Eat - Little Kids First (1996)* Cerebral Palsy Association of Western Australia.