



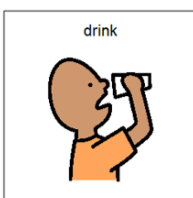
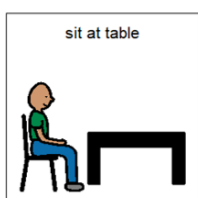
SCT Eating advice: Top Tips

Remember that You are not alone. Many autistic people find eating and drinking new things difficult.

Make a Plan before you make any changes.

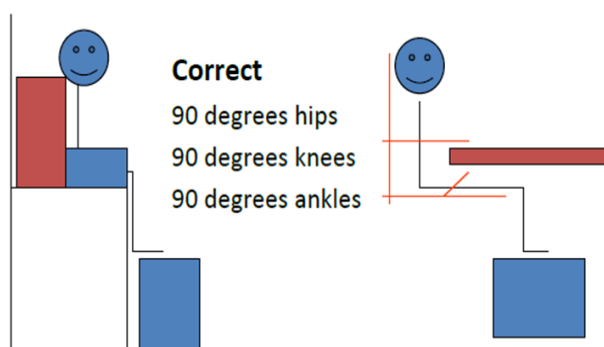
Before you start:

- Make your visuals and get a place mat if needed.

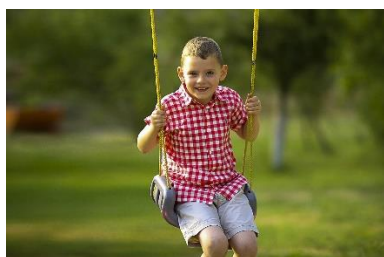


- Plan to have 5 to 6 meals per day (this includes snacks too).
- Make sure your child has good seating so they can focus.

SEATING FOR EATING



- Does your child need some sensory play before the meal to help them be in the 'just right' mood?



The meal or snack time:



- Reduce distractions. No TV, iPad, or phone if possible.
- Offer a favourite or safe food with each meal or snack.
- Introduce new foods on a "practice plate" if needed.
- Eat with your child. Eat some of the same foods they like.
- Don't force feed, or put food to their mouth, instead allow them to explore at their own pace.



- Reduce the pressure and show and model eating yourself. Talk about how "yummy" your own food is.
- Don't allow grazing. Eating happens at meal or snack times.

Finish on a positive note:

- Be patient, they will notice your emotions, so try to keep meals positive and relaxed.
- Use positive language.
- Keep meals short, aim for 20-30 minutes maximum.

**After the meal or snack:**

- When the meal is finished, encourage your child to scrape or tip the food to the bin, even if they didn't eat much.



- Take time to think about what went well and what you need to change.
- Notice and celebrate 😊 each new step. Learning to eat and drink new foods can be challenging and can take time.

Try some of these ideas and book onto the SCT to an 'eating next steps' parent session for more information and advice via our website:

<https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/IANDS-SCT>

The Social Communication Team