

Eating and Drinking (Assistive Technology)

- Eating and drinking can be difficult for some people
- Assistive technology (AT) and strategies can make eating and drinking easier

What impacts eating and drinking?

Eating and drinking are essential daily tasks. For some people, polio can affect the way you eat and drink. For example, muscle weakness, fatigue and reduced range of movement can result in eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties.


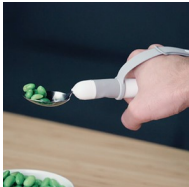





Speech Pathologists can help polio survivors to managing [swallowing difficulties](#).

Equipment can also be helpful for some people.

What is available?

There is a very wide range of assistive technology (AT—also known as [aids and equipment](#)) available, and it is important that it meets your specific needs. Your health professional can recommend the best items for you.

Here are some examples of AT that you might use:

Common Problems	Example AT	Photos of AT
Muscle weakness	D-shape handle cup Swivel utensils	 
Reduced flexibility	Enlarged utensils Elongated utensils Utensil holder/ universal cuff	  
Reduced hand function	Non-slip mat Sipping cup Weighted utensils Weighted cuff	 

Purchasing equipment

Most AT can be found on the Independent Living Centre Australia's [website](#). This site will direct you to companies selling the equipment.

Things to consider when choosing AT

There is a wide range of AT available. There are some key points to consider when choosing the right AT for you. To find a full list of considerations when choosing AT please see the [aids and equipment fact sheet](#).

Safety Considerations

- Early signs of swallowing difficulty include food sticking in the throat, coughing while eating, reflux, taking longer to finish a meal and unintentional weight loss
- See a Speech Pathologist if you have any signs of swallowing difficulty
- Avoid hard and solid food if you are concerned about your swallowing—soft food might be safer for you
- Avoid utensils and containers made of fragile or breakable materials such as ceramic and glass
- Be aware of sharp edges—these can cause injury to your mouth
- For more information about swallowing problems after polio, see our [fact sheet](#)

Funding

There is a range of government and non-government funding to help you pay for your AT.

Each funding scheme is different. Some will only fund certain types of equipment. Check with your state funding organisation for more details about what is available for you.

For more information, visit www.polioaustralia.org.au/lifestyle-aids-and-equipment and click the “Funding” tab.

Individual Help

- Ask your doctor for a referral to see an [Occupational Therapist \(OT\)](#)
- If you are having any swallowing difficulties, ask your doctor for a referral to see a Speech Pathologist
- Contact the [Independent Living Centre](#) or 1300 885 886

Thank you to Occupational Therapy students at Monash University for developing this fact sheet.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of Polio Australia, and any products, services or treatments described are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by Polio Australia.