

TIPS FOR USING CUTLERY

Using a knife and fork correctly can be a very difficult skill to learn. You may worry about making a mess and feel frustrated about how difficult it is for you compared to other children. The following tips may help you to learn this skill.

General Tips:

- You should sit at the table so that you can rest your forearms on the table. Your feet should be resting on the floor or on a box.
- Ensure the plate is in front of you and is not likely to slip around. Non slip matting can be bought from many shops.
- Cutlery should be the correct size for you. Child-sized or cutlery with wider handles is often easier to hold and use.
- If you are right-handed, you should hold your knife in your right hand. If you are left-handed, then hold your knife in whichever hand feels easiest.
- Check that you are holding your knife and fork correctly with both index fingers pointing down the shaft of the knife and fork like this:
- Some children prefer to practice at the beginning of a meal when they are less tired. Find out what suits you best.
- Start only with food that is easy to cut
- Gradually try foods which are more difficult to cut
- Little by little build up to using cutlery for the whole meal.
- Ask an adult to demonstrate how to stab food with the fork and then saw it into bite-size pieces with the knife.
- If it is difficult for you to copy, ask an adult to place their hands over yours so that you can feel how your hands need to move while you cut food.
- Remove any unnecessary distractions e.g. turn off the television, radio etc.
- Restrict practice to meals at home with close family until you have learnt this skill
- Only practice when there is plenty of time, not when you are rushing to go somewhere else.
- Be prepared to make a mess while learning
- Younger children can practice as part of play, by cutting soft play dough. This can be a good way to gain confidence before moving on to real food.



- Put marks on the cutlery using tape or Tippex to remind you where to position your finger tips:



- Begin by practicing for just a few minutes towards the end of the meal when you feel less hungry (just a few cuts)
- Start only with food that is easy to cut

**Community Paediatric
Occupational Therapy**
Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust
Regent Point, Level 3, Regent Farm
Road, Gosforth, Newcastle upon
Tyne, NE3 3HD
Tel: 0191 2823452