

# Me at Mealtimes



A book to help you talk about eating,  
drinking and swallowing

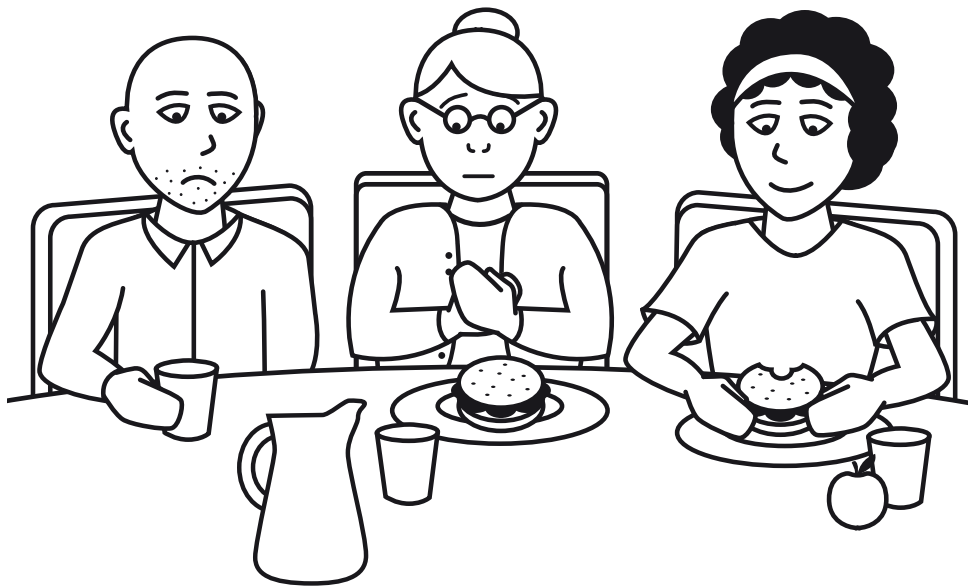
Author: Susan Guthrie, Specialist Speech and Language Therapist

# How to use this book...

Use the pictures and words to help you think about eating and drinking. Talk about the different meals you have during the day, including special meals and trips out, snacks and brew times.

Is there anything you find **difficult**, **painful** or **embarrassing** when eating and drinking?

Eating and drinking is something we do every day. Mealtimes should be good times. Food and drink should be a nice experience for everybody.



# Problems at mealtimes?

For some people it can be difficult to manage food or drink in the mouth and to swallow safely.

Sometimes people cough or choke on food or drink. It can feel like food or drink goes down the wrong way.

Some people have difficulty moving their tongue or chewing. It can be difficult swallowing food and drink. Some people collect food in their mouth or have food left in their throat after they have swallowed or finished a meal.

This booklet is to help you think about your eating and drinking.

## **Can you think what makes eating and drinking good or bad for you?**

If you are worried about eating, drinking or swallowing problems you can get specialist advice from a Speech and Language Therapist.



## **1** Me at mealtimes...

# How is it going?

When you are eating or drinking how do you feel?

- Happy
- Stressed
- Worried
- Embarrassed
- Settled
- Rushed
- Relaxed
- Angry

How do you feel at breakfast, lunchtime, tea and supper?



## **2** Food and drink in my mouth...

# How does it feel to eat, drink and swallow?

Talk about putting food in your mouth and having a drink.  
Think about the process of chewing and swallowing.

Some foods are soft and some are chewy. How do you manage  
with these?

Do you ever cough or choke on food or drink? Do you ever get  
any sort of pain or stiffness in your teeth, throat or neck?

Do you need an extra swallow to get food down?





### **3 Food and drink in my mouth...**

## Do you put too much food into your mouth?

Talk about the speed of eating. Putting too much in your mouth at once or eating very fast can make you cough or choke.

Does this happen to you?



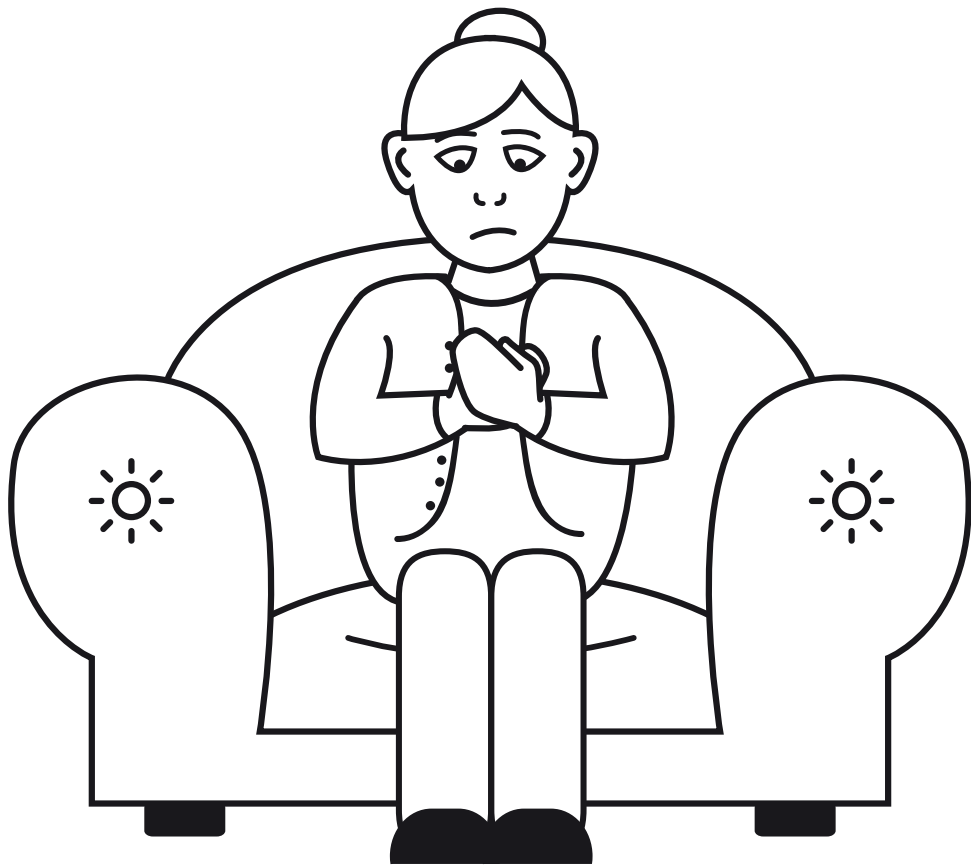
#### **4 What about other times of the day...**

## How does your mouth, throat and chest feel?

Can you taste your food and drink? Do you ever get a dry mouth? How is your sense of smell / appetite / thirst?

Sometimes medication can have side effects such as dry mouth or strange tastes.

How is your breathing when you are eating, drinking or swallowing? Does your breathing ever get noisy around mealtimes or drink times?



## **5 Me at mealtimes...**

# What help do you need from staff?

Do you need help with:

- Feeding yourself
- Choosing from the menu
- Preparing / cooking food
- Using thickeners in drinks
- Cleaning yourself up afterwards
- Special handles, plates or cups

Do staff help you to remember advice about eating and drinking?



## **6** Teatime...

# What is the meal like?

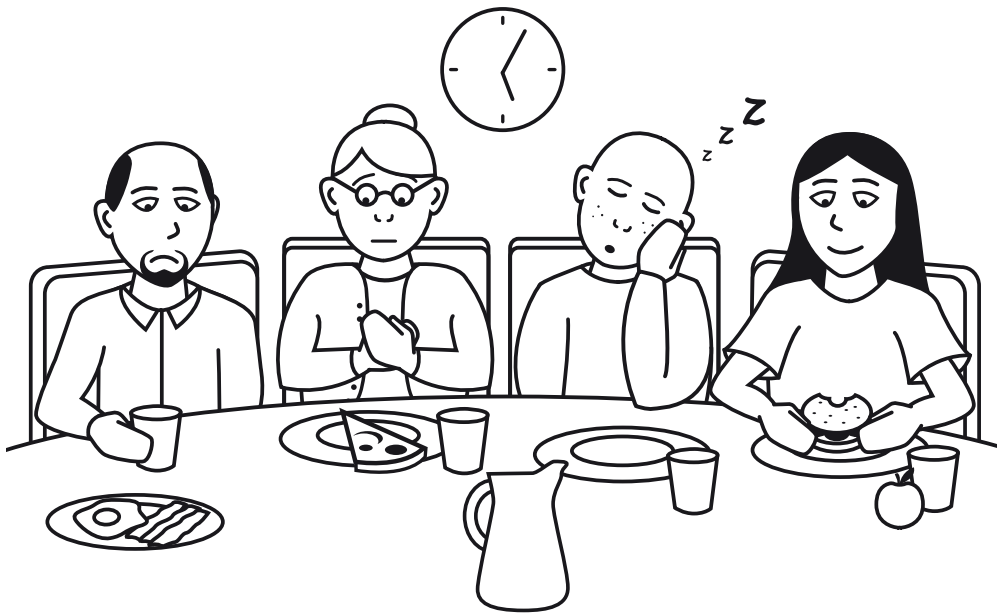
More people have problems at teatime than at any other time (for all sorts of reasons).

Talk about the sorts of foods you have at teatime.

Can you manage to swallow everything?

Do you have any problems swallowing drinks?





## **7** Teatime and other times...

# What is the dining room like?

Is it busy, hectic or noisy? Does it feel rushed or quiet?

Who else is sitting at the table?

Do some people want to rush off after the meal? How does this make you feel?

What happens after the meal? Where do people go?



## **8 Other people at mealtimes...**

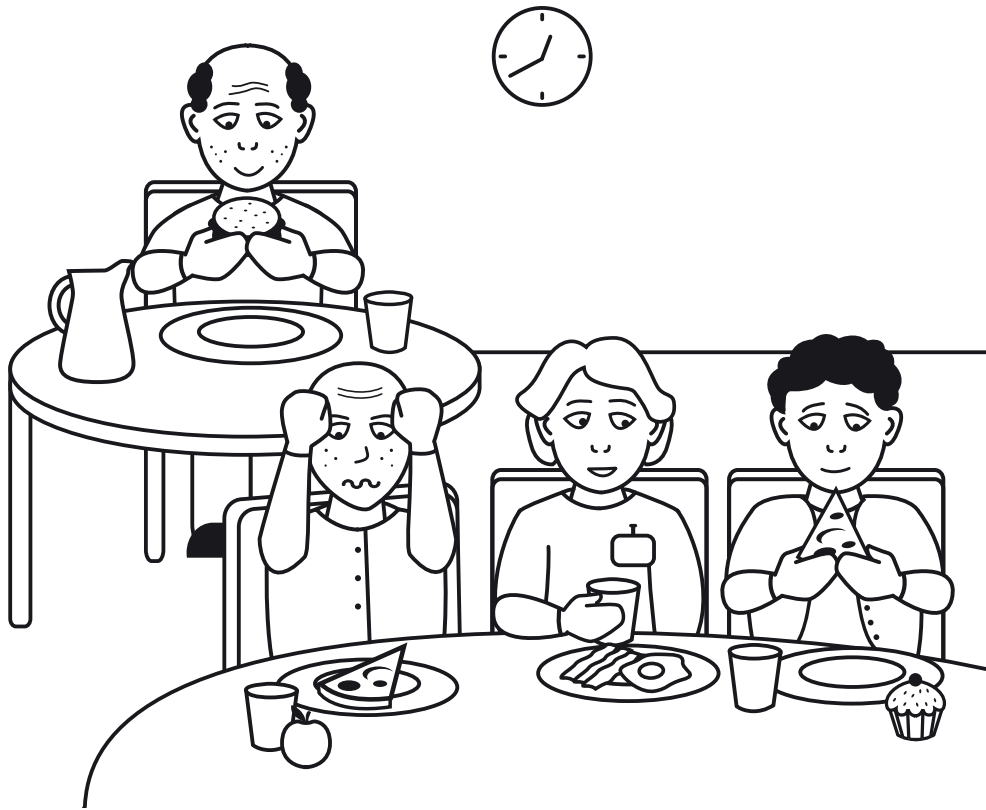
# How do you feel about others at mealtimes?

How do you feel about other people near you? Do you like to have someone with you?

Do you like to eat with lots of people or just one or two?

Do staff sit at the table with you?

What do you prefer? Is there anything you don't like?



## 9 Your health...

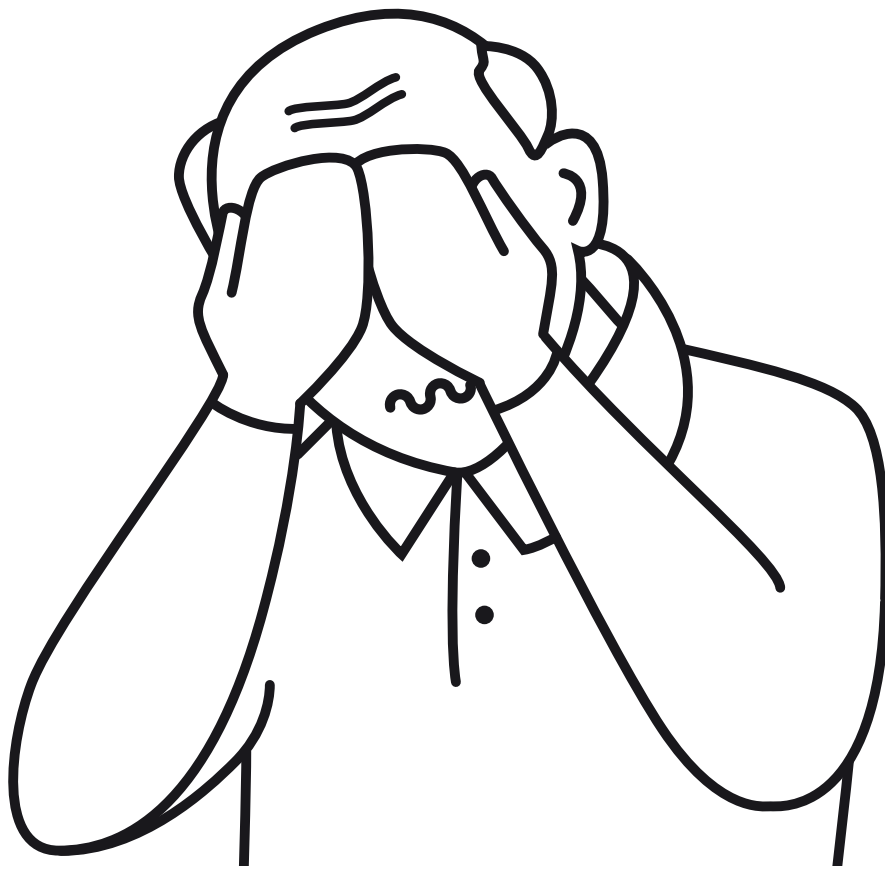
# Does your health affect you at mealtimes?

Do you have problems with:

- Chest infections
- Concentration / distractions
- Breathing
- Epilepsy
- Weight loss
- Mental illness
- Balance

Is there anything that stops you eating or drinking?

Can you sit at the table for the meal or do you get tired?



**10** Your health...

Do you get a sore mouth  
sometimes?

Do you ever get sore teeth?

Does your mouth hurt after eating certain types of foods?





## **11** Me at mealtimes...

# Do you sometimes say no to food and drink?

Does it get difficult to eat and drink sometimes?

Do you feel a lump in your throat?

Do you vomit or bring your food back up?

Do you ever get food going up your nose?

Sometimes saliva or food can dribble out of the mouth.

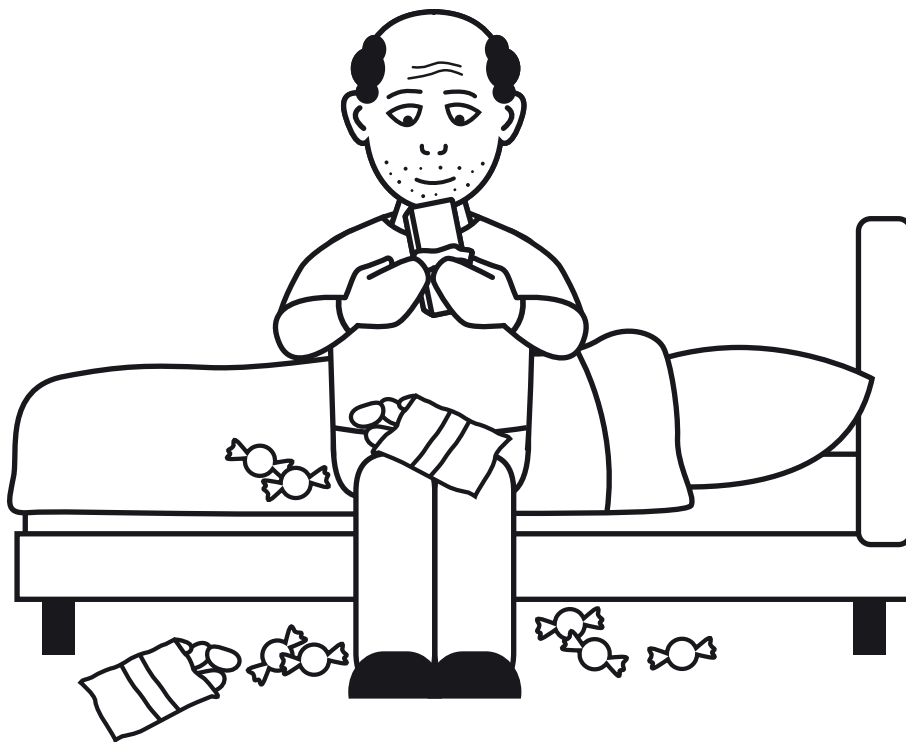
Does this happen to you?

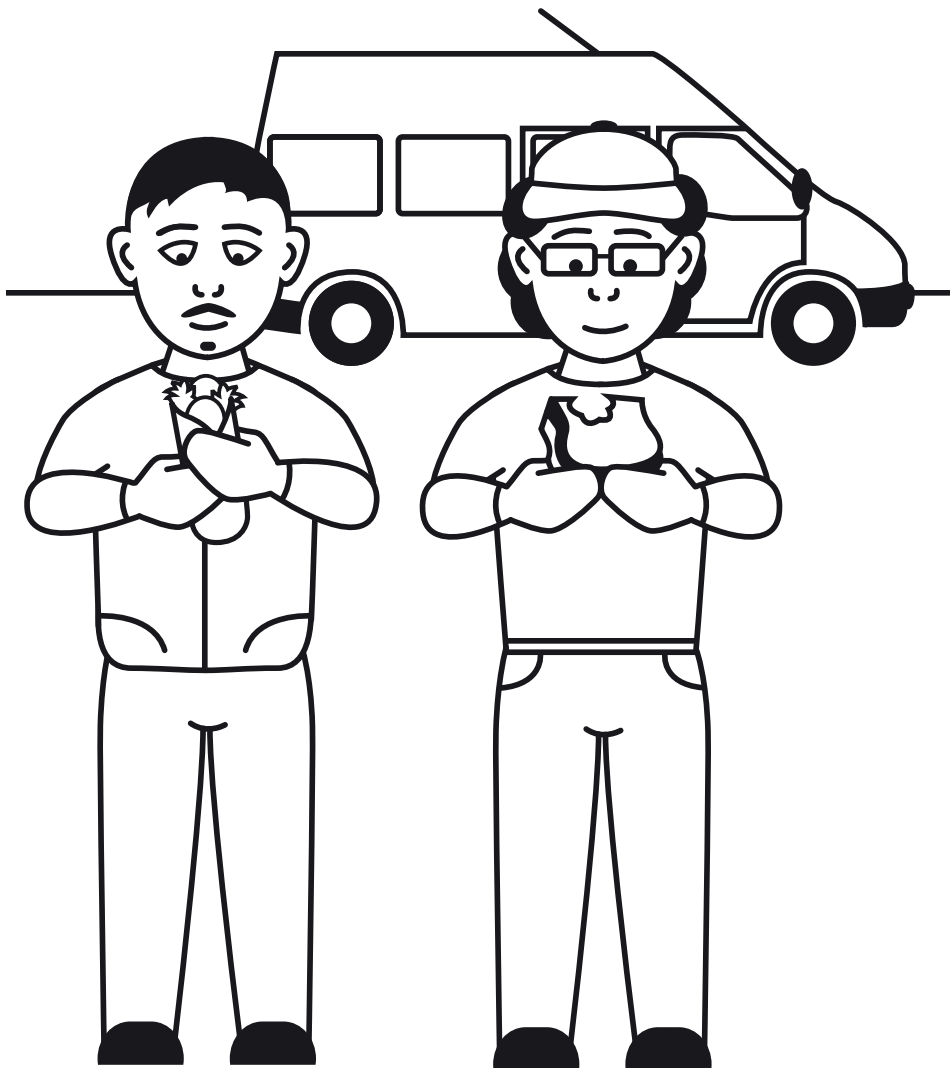


**12 Me at mealtimes...**

Do you ever eat on your own?

Do you ever eat on your own in the canteen, in your bedroom, in town or out on a trip?

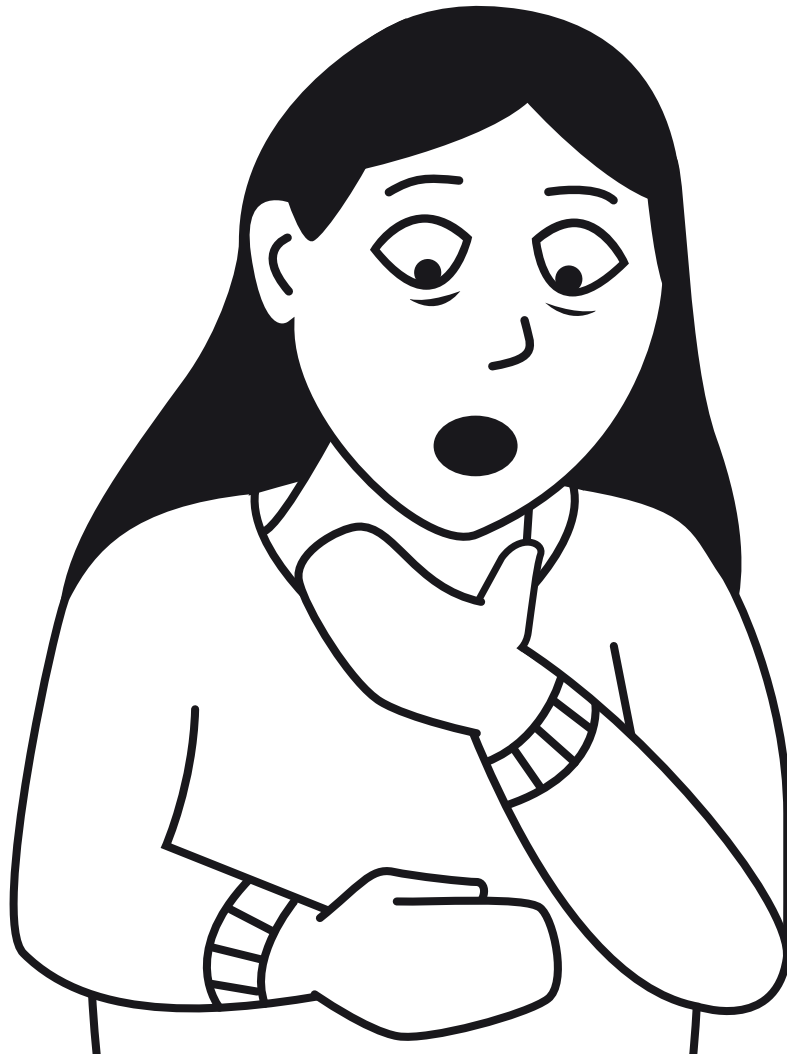




**13 Me at mealtimes...**

Have you ever choked on anything?

Talk about what happened...



**14** Me at mealtimes...

# Do you ever self-harm?

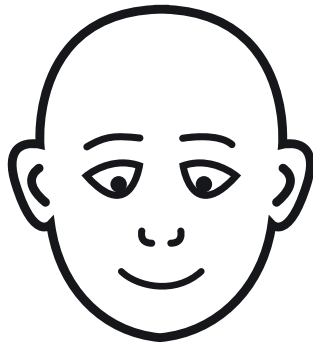
Sometimes do you try to hurt yourself by eating things which are not food or drink?



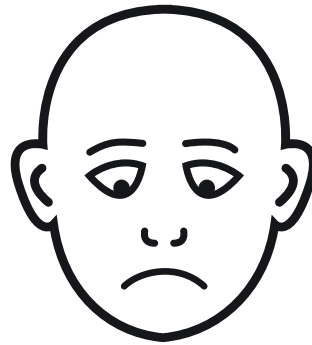


# How do you feel...

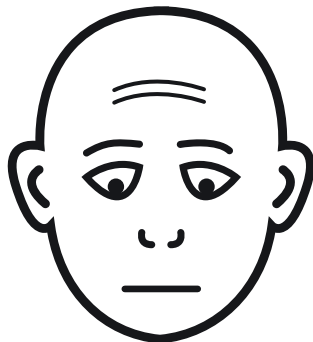
Use the pictures below to show how you feel when eating and drinking at mealtimes.



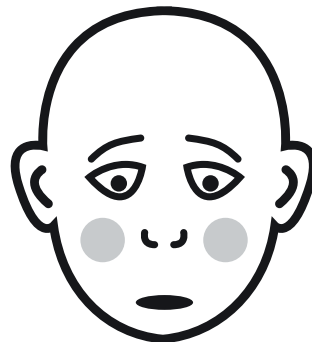
Happy



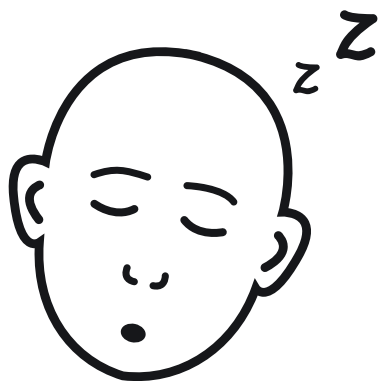
Sad



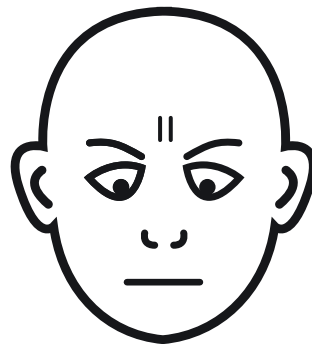
Unsure / Worried



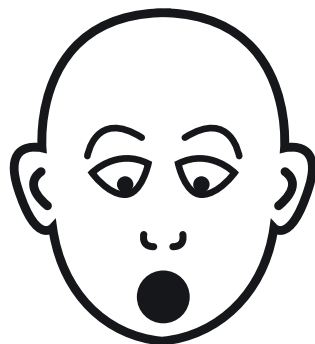
Embarrassed



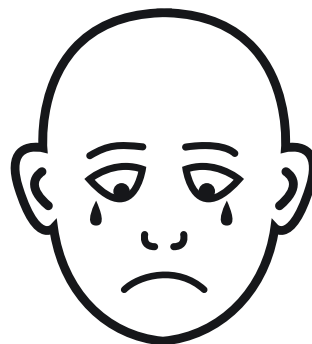
Tired



Angry



Scared



Upset

Thank you to service users and staff who helped with ideas and suggestions for this booklet.

If you are worried about any mealtime difficulties (either eating, drinking or swallowing) please talk to your doctor or a Speech and Language Therapist.

Lancashire Care   
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Calderstones Partnership   
NHS Foundation Trust

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