To eat or not to eat

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It’s hard to stick to a special diet

- HPN and HEN consumers are often prescribed a special diet that restricts normal foods
- Compliance is a challenge
- Life is centered around food
Food is not always our friend!

- Evoke anxiety for HPN and HEN consumers
- Eating can lead to pain, discomfort, or urgent restroom visits
- Not eating can spark numerous questions
Overview

- Emotional impact of dietary restrictions
- Complications with disclosing dietary restrictions, illness, and/or disabilities
- Helpful tips to navigate eating challenges
Factors associated with dietary compliance

- Hunger vs. cravings
- Eating at home vs. away from home
- Social or peer pressure
I want to be normal

- Interviews conducted with 24 adults with short bowel syndrome
- Quality of life was evaluated
- Lifestyle was affected by health, stamina, diarrhea, having an ostomy, and infusion schedule
- Strong desire to achieve normalcy in life

I want to eat so bad, I could almost cry
I want to eat so bad, I could almost cry!

- Eat or infuse nutrition prior to the party to combat true hunger
- Offer to help with the cooking
- Bring your own “safe” food or drink
I want to eat cake like the other kids, but I don’t want my belly to hurt
Disclosing food issues can lead to a stigma

- In 2006, Sabrina’s Law mandates disclosure of severe food allergies for school age children.
- A 2008 study conducted interviews with 20 children and their parents.
- Children were stigmatized as a result of the law.
- Conflict between physical safety and social well-being.

Dean J. *Health Soc Care Community*. May 4, 2015 [Epub ahead of print]
I want to eat cake like the other kids, but I don’t want my belly to hurt

- Be prepared – talk to children about what may happen if they eat the cake
- Pack “safe” foods
- Communicate special nutritional needs with someone that is going to be at the party
Some situations are unavoidable

- Business lunch
- Job interview meal
- Conference activities
I will put some food on my plate and move it around a bit and hopefully no one will notice I’m not eating…”
Successful employment with disabilities

- Individuals with disabilities face barriers to employment

- Investigators interviewed 41 people competitively employed for at least 5 years and discussed disabilities

- Disclosure and discussion decisions were influenced by the disability

- People with disabilities must work harder than others to get a job

I will put some food on my plate and move it around a bit and hopefully no one will notice I’m not eating…

- Decide how much or little you want to disclose and to whom

- Communicate to someone

- Have a wingman to help take the pressure off
Avoiding conventional eating should not make you avoid friends!

- Social withdraw is a typical reaction when working through new eating restrictions.
- Avoiding social food interactions may make you feel worse about your situation.
If I just hold this coffee cup, maybe no one will notice I’m not drinking.

Liz has been holding that cup, but hasn’t taken a drink yet. I wonder if she is okay?
To tell or not to tell

- Be honest
  - Eliminate assumptions
  - Communicate what makes you comfortable

- True friends will care about your wellbeing and will be supportive and want to help

- Avoid unnecessary drama
Dating with eating challenges

- First dates can be stressful even without food challenges
- Have a game plan
- Be prepared
I hope there isn’t a line for the restroom.
I hope there isn’t a line for the restroom!

- Know your environment
- Pick a restaurant or coffee shop that is familiar
- Choose a “safe” food
- Decide before meeting how much you want to disclose
Your true friends and family will accept you and your eating challenges

- Be honest
- Avoid unnecessary drama
It is so nice to enjoy a meal with my family and not be judged for what I do and don’t eat.
It is so nice to enjoy a meal with my family and not be judged for what I do and don’t eat.

- Find friends and family that you can enjoy their company without the worries of food
- Enjoy activities that do not involve eating
- Start incorporating non-food traditions into your holiday and celebratory functions
Stick to your safe foods
Be prepared for the worst
Join us for more discussion

Rick Davis and Terry Edwards will join me for an informal discussion

Breakout session today in Geyser

- **Session 1**: 2:45 – 3:45 PM
- **Session 2**: 4:00 – 5:00 PM