OSCE checklist for assisting a patient with feeding

An OSCE checklist for assisting a patient with feeding covers checking the diet order, allergies and swallowing advice, positioning the patient upright, offering small mouthfuls at the patient's pace, acting on signs of choking and recording what was eaten.

OSCE checklist for assisting a patient with feeding: steps to practise

1. Clean your hands, introduce yourself, confirm the patient's name and date of birth against the wristband and the diet order, and ask how they would like to be helped.
2. Check that the patient is not nil by mouth, and check the diet and fluid texture, any speech and language therapy swallowing advice, food allergies and any foods they cannot or will not eat.
3. Check the patient is awake and alert enough to eat. Do not feed a drowsy patient.
4. Offer a toilet visit and hand cleaning, make sure dentures, glasses and hearing aids are in, and clear the table of clutter.
5. Sit the patient fully upright, ideally out of bed, with the head slightly forward unless the swallowing advice says otherwise.
6. Check the meal matches the order and allergy information, and that the food is at a safe temperature. Place a napkin if the patient wishes.
7. Sit at eye level, tell the patient what is on the plate, and ask what they would like first.
8. Offer small mouthfuls, wait until each is swallowed, and offer drinks of the advised texture between mouthfuls.
9. Watch for coughing, a wet voice, food left in the mouth, breathlessness or tiredness. Stop and report if you see any of these.
10. If the patient chokes, call for help at once. Encourage them to cough, and if coughing is not working, give back blows and abdominal thrusts as you have been trained, following Resus Council UK guidance.
11. After the meal, offer mouth care, clean the patient's hands and keep them upright for the time set in their swallowing plan.

12. Clean your hands, record what and how much was eaten and drunk on the food and fluid chart, and report poor intake to the nurse in charge.

What candidates commonly forget

- Not checking nil by mouth status and swallowing advice first
- Giving the wrong food or drink texture
- Feeding a patient who is lying flat or drowsy
- Standing over the patient
- Hurrying the next mouthful
- Not recording intake

Local policy comes first

This is our own practice checklist. Your college, hospital or country may do some steps differently. Where local policy and this list disagree, follow local policy.

Practise the hands-on steps with a classmate or in a skills lab, because an AI patient cannot watch your technique. You can practise the talking part with an AI patient, and try one station free with no sign-up. Next, try Care plan for a stroke survivor who coughs when drinking. Back to the nursing foundation OSCE page: nursing foundation OSCE, or see the full OSCE checklist list.

Common questions

What is the OSCE checklist for assisting with feeding?

Check identity, nil by mouth status, the diet order, allergies and swallowing advice, clean hands, sit the patient upright, give small mouthfuls at their pace, watch for coughing or choking, give mouth care and record intake.

What do I do if the patient coughs during a meal?

Stop feeding, keep the patient upright and let them cough. Call for help if breathing is affected or the cough is not clearing the food. Report it so a swallow assessment can be arranged.

Why sit at eye level?

It feels respectful, lets you see the face and helps the patient stay upright and calm.

Sources

- NMC: standards of proficiency for registered nurses
- NICE CG32: nutrition support for adults
- Resuscitation Council UK: guidelines

Checked 2026-11-13. Fees and rules change, so confirm them with the regulator before you book.