



## Therapies Directorate, Paediatric Nutrition and Dietetics Information for Children and their Families

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### Soft and Easy to Chew Foods for Children IDDSI Level 6 – Soft and Bite Sized

- Food is soft, tender and moist throughout with no separate thin liquid (any sauce added should be thick)
- Can be eaten with fingers, fork, spoon or chopsticks
- Food pieces are 8mm x 8mm for children to reduce choking risk (this is half of the width of a standard dinner fork)
- Some chewing required but biting off food is not required
- To make sure the food is soft enough, press down on the fork until the thumbnail blanches to white, then lift the fork to see that the food is completely squashed and does not regain its shape
- It should not contain any 'bits', fibres, hard skins or pips
- If you notice the food pieces are not being chewed well though, please contact your speech and language therapist to make sure your child is on the correct food texture to reduce choking risk

#### Preparing soft and bite-sized food for your child

- Soft and bite-sized foods may be prepared in a number of ways including steaming or boiling
- Some foods may need to be mixed with a thick sauce e.g. thick gravy, white sauce or custard
- Foods will need cutting down into consistent bite sized pieces
- Ensure no fibres or skins remain in the food after preparing. If there are, the food will need to be pureed (with a liquidiser or processer) and passed through a sieve

#### Foods to prepare with care

Care should be taken when preparing any food, however there are some foods e.g. fish with small bones, some meats (which contain fat/gristle), which will need extra attention.

#### Foods to avoid

There are some foods which cannot be prepared to a soft and bite sized texture and are best to avoid:

- **Dry/crisp foods:** muesli, crisps, battered/breaded food, crisp breads, rice cakes, popcorn, bread/chapatti
- **Mixed thin and thick textures:** e.g. soup with vegetable chunks, watermelon (where liquid comes away from the food piece), cereal with milk
- **Tough foods:** e.g. steak, pineapple
- **Hard foods:** tough/dry meat, boiled sweets, nuts, seeds
- **Sticky foods:** chewy/gummy sweets, peanut butter, toffee
- **Stringy foods:** celery, green beans, pineapple, lettuce stalks
- **Husks and skins:** dried fruit, grape skins, peas, sweet corn
- **Crumble foods:** biscuits, pastry, crumble topping

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- **Sharp foods:** e.g. crisps , corn chips
  - **Round and long shaped foods:** e.g. grapes, skinned sausages, hotdogs
  - **Crusts or skins formed during cooking:** e.g. melted cheese or heated milk
  - **Floppy foods** eg lettuce, cucumber, spinach leaves

## **Mealtime ideas for soft and bite-sized foods**

All Foods should be cut into 8mm x 8mm bite sized pieces.

### **Breakfast**

- Ready Brek <sup>TM</sup> or porridge with milk
- Weetabix<sup>TM</sup>, Shreddies<sup>TM</sup>, Rice Krispies<sup>TM</sup>, Cherrios<sup>TM</sup>, Cornflakes<sup>TM</sup>, Coco-pops <sup>TM</sup> fully softened with excess milk drained off
- Smooth yoghurt or fromage frais with soft/ripe fruit
- Tinned spaghetti
- Sausages without skins, soft cooked, not chewy, chopped into 8mm x 8mm pieces and or mashed into an irregular shape
- Sweet waffles or scotch pancakes in syrup

### **Main Meals**

- Meat or vegetable curry or dhal. If given with chapatti ensure it is freshly made and broken into small pieces
- Fish in sauce e.g. butter, cheese, parsley sauce
- Cottage pie/ Shepherd's pie/ fish pie/chilli / spaghetti bolognaise with fine mince meat
- Pasta dishes e.g. macaroni cheese, ravioli, in 8mm x 8mm pieces
- Baked potato (without skin), in 8mm x 8mm pieces, with soft filling e.g. cream cheese, tuna mayo, chilli
- Meat/poultry, soft cooked in sauce/gravy, in 8mm x 8mm pieces
- Rice requires a sauce to moisten it and hold it together. Rice should not be sticky or gluey and should not separate into individual grains when cooked and served. May require a thick, smooth, non-pouring sauce to moisten and hold the rice together
- Chips or roast potatoes, with any hard edges removed, in 8mm x 8mm pieces
- Baked beans, squashed with a fork to help break down the husk
- Lentils and pulses may be served if they are very soft throughout
- Soft cooked noodles
- Vegetables and potatoes, boiled or steamed, in 8mm x 8mm sizes (not stir fried)
- No regular dry bread due to high choking risk. See <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC0I9FDJwJR0L5svIGCvIqHA/featured?reload=9> for instructions on how to make a Level 5 Minced & Moist sandwich, as this is also suitable for use on Soft and Bite-Sized diet

### **Puddings**

- Smooth yoghurt, quark or fromage frais with soft/ripe fruit
- Trifle, tiramisu, cake with custard/cream
- Kheer
- Soft ripe fresh fruit, tinned fruit, stewed fruit, Serve with custard, yoghurt or cream
- Packet desserts made with milk e.g. Angel Delight <sup>TM</sup>
- Canned puddings e.g. rice pudding, semolina, custard
- Fruit smoothie, blended with milk/yoghurt/evaporated milk
- Crème caramel, panacotta, mousse, cheesecake (no biscuit base)

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## General Advice

- If possible, and advised by the professionals involved, try to ensure your child has a regular meal routine (e.g. 3 meals and 2 snacks each day)
- Encourage a varied and balanced diet including foods from each of the five food groups
- Ensure meals look appetising
- Use the following website as a guide to help you: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide>
- First Steps Nutrition website: <http://firststepsnutrition.org>

These are general guidelines. You may also be given more specific recommendations by a Speech and Language Therapist or Dietitian.

If you observe that your child does not manage a food of this consistency stop offering that food and try something different of this consistency.

**If you have any further queries or concerns about your child's eating and drinking, please contact your Paediatric Dietitian on 0121 424 1674 or your Community Speech and Language Therapist**

## References

International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative : IDDSI <http://iddsi.org>

## Leaflets Produced by:

Birmingham Community Nutrition - Paediatric Dietitians  
Birmingham Community Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service  
Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust - Speech and Language Therapy Service

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