



## Dysphagia Diet: Dietary Advice Puree Diet Level 4

### Why do I need a texture modified diet?

With some types of illness or treatment you may experience chewing or swallowing problems, which makes eating difficult. Swallowing problems are called dysphagia. Without a texture modified diet, you may be at risk of food going into your lungs, which could cause a chest infection or more immediately can cause choking.

Due to swallowing difficulties you may also be advised to have fluids that are thickened. A speech and language therapist will advise you further if you require thickener in your drinks.

It is very important to eat a varied diet with enough calories and protein. This will help to keep you well-nourished. This is important over the course of your illness or through your treatment and may help to speed up your recovery.

This booklet gives you some ideas on preparing puree or liquidised foods. We hope this booklet will give you and those who may be involved in the preparation of your meals some guidance, so that you can stay as well-nourished as possible. If you have been in hospital you may have been taking some of these options whilst receiving the Level 4 Puree menu.

### What is a Level 4 Puree Diet?

- ✓ It is smooth throughout with no 'bits' (no lumps, fibres, bits of shell, skin, husk, particles of gristle, bone, etc.)
- ✓ It is a thick purée and is moist
- ✓ It holds its shape on a plate or when scooped
- ✓ It is usually eaten with a spoon (a fork is possible)
- ✓ It can be piped, layered or moulded
- X It cannot be poured
- X It cannot be sucked through a straw or drunk from a cup
- X It does not require chewing and is not sticky
- X There are no loose fluids that separate out from the meal

### Food preparation

Most foods can be prepared by adding extra milk, gravy or sauce.

Food can be prepared using a food processor, liquidiser or hand blender. The food should be smooth throughout and may need to be sieved to achieve this texture.

It is always a good idea to prepare larger portions and then freeze individual portions for a later date.

Food can often look more appetising if items are pureed separately rather than mixing them all together. This means that the individual taste of each food is maintained rather than the whole meal tasting of one flavour. Herbs, spices and sauces can still be used to flavour your foods, unless they make your mouth sore because of the treatments that you are having.

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## **Tips when using a liquidiser/blender**

- Before switching on, ensure the blades are covered with food or liquid
- You may find it easier to blend small quantities at a time as the liquidiser then works more efficiently. It may take up to two minutes to blend the food to the correct consistency
- If liquidising hot liquids, such as sauces, allow to cool slightly before adding to the liquidiser
- Check the lid is secure before switching on to prevent splashes and spills. Rinse immediately after use and clean using warm water and detergent. Be careful not to immerse the base of the machine or any electrical parts in the water
- When blending more than one food, start with the lighter colours first so that you don't have to wash the container before adding the next food
- When using liquids to thin down foods, try to use whole milk, cream or stocks where possible. This would provide more energy and protein to the meal

## **Before serving or eating**

Check there are no hard pieces, crusts or skins that have formed during cooking, heating or standing. Also check that any fluids, gravy, sauces and/or custard in or on the food has not thinned out or separated off.

## **Keep well-nourished**

Whilst following a puree diet, it may be difficult to take enough nutritious foods to help maintain your weight. Try to eat a variety of foods and eating 'little and often' may be more manageable if your appetite is poor. Aim for 3 meals and 3 snacks/nutritious drinks a day. These can include milky drinks, soups and snacks such as yoghurts, custards and mousses.

Remember to liaise with your speech and language therapist if you are required to have thickened fluids.

Fortifying your foods can also help to add extra protein to make them more nutritious. This can be done by:

- Adding margarine/butter or grated cheese to mashed potatoes and pureed vegetables
- Adding cheese and cream to soups
- Adding honey, sugar and jam to cereals, drinks and puddings, Evaporated / Condensed milk
- Using fortified milk. This can be made by adding 4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to 1 pint of full cream milk. This can be used in puddings and sauces

Try to weigh yourself once a week. If you find that you are still losing weight contact your dietitian who will be able to give you further advice and suggest nutritional products available to help with your weight.

## **Suggested meal ideas**

Try to choose foods you are familiar with and enjoy the taste of.

### **Breakfast**

- Wheat biscuit cereal fully softened in hot milk, ensuring no milk separates off
- Instant oat cereal with fruit puree
- Scrambled eggs cooked with butter and milk and pureed with milk/ Cream
- Blended coconut rice porridge with pureed banana.

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## Main meals

- Smooth hummus with tahini and olive oil
- Pureed chickpea stew with mild spices and olive oil.
- Smooth thick soups
- Fish purees with white sauce/parsley sauce
- Pureed meat/chicken/vegetarian option in gravy sauce
- Macaroni/cauliflower cheese pureed with cheese sauce
- Pureed cheese and potato pie
- Pureed lentil chickpeas curry
- Serve pureed meals with pureed root vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, swede, sweet potato, mashed potatoes, pureed pasta in sauce

## Puddings

- Custard and mousse pots
- Crème caramel
- Instant whip
- Smooth full fat yoghurts
- Pureed milk puddings/semolina/rice pudding / Kheer
- Smooth almond and date pudding
- Pureed fruit with cream/custard
- Ice creams and jellies may need to be avoided if you require thickened fluids, as these can melt in the mouth whilst being eaten

Some food companies also prepare pureed 'ready meals' which can be delivered to your home. Your dietitian or speech and language therapist can advise you about these.

## Sustainability Ideas

Increase Plant-Based Proteins: more plant-based protein sources.

Batch Cooking & Freezing: Prepare larger portions and freeze for convenience, reducing waste.

Sustainable Packaging: Choose foods with little or recyclable packaging and use reusable containers for meals and drinks.

Energy Saving: Use energy-saving cooking methods like steaming, microwaving, air-fryer or using a pressure cooker to reduce energy use.

**Your dietitian/speech and language therapist may suggest trying the following:**

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If you have any further queries please contact your dietitian and speech and language therapist for further information.

**Dietitian contact details:**

**Nutrition and Dietetic Service**  
University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

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