



## Achalasia – dietary advice

### What is achalasia?

Achalasia is a tightness of the lower oesophagus, where the muscles in the lower oesophagus do not relax and this is combined with the muscles in the oesophagus not contracting to push food down the oesophagus. This can make it difficult to swallow food and drink. The most common symptom of achalasia is difficulty swallowing which can lead to weight loss.

### Treatment options

Treatment options for achalasia include endoscopic and surgical options. Your surgeon will discuss with you the best options to help manage your symptoms.

Some of the endoscopic options include:

- **Dilatation** – which involves the stretching of the muscle that leads food into your stomach using a balloon passed via an endoscope. The effect may be permanent in some patients but in others temporary and may need to be repeated. It is usually done as a day case procedure.
- **Botox** – is injected into the muscle that leads food into the stomach helping it to relax. The effect of this is only temporary and this usually needs to be repeated every three to four months. It is therefore only advisable for patients who are not fit enough for any other treatment.

Hellers myotomy is a surgical procedure performed under general anaesthetic where the fibres of the sphincter are cut. This is often paired with a second procedure to prevent reflux or heartburn as Hellers myotomy can lead to heart burn. This is often done through keyhole or laparoscopic surgery.

**Please note for post-surgical dietary advice we have a separate diet sheet that will be provided.**

### Diet

You may find that some of the time you are able to swallow most foods without any problems. If you are starting to have difficulty swallowing or experiencing more regurgitation, we would advise that you adopt a soft textured diet.

Having smaller meals and snacks more often may also be better tolerated.

In more severe cases, blending your meals to a puree consistency or following a liquid diet are more likely to be tolerated.

If you need to adopt a puree or a liquid diet speak to your surgeon to request a referral to a dietitian for support to help manage this and to ensure that you can meet your nutritional needs adequately.

## Soft diet

### Hints and tips for a soft diet:

Breakfast	Lunch/evening meals	Desserts/snack ideas
Porridge or Ready Brek	Shepherd's pie, cottage pie	Milk puddings (e.g., custard, rice pudding or semolina)
Wheat biscuits or 'soggy' cereal (e.g., cornflakes soaked in full fat milk)	Minced cooked meats with gravy or sauce or well-cooked chicken or meat curry soaked with chapatti	Sponge pudding or cake
Pureed fruit such as tinned pears or stewed fruit	Small pieces of tender meat (e.g. meat or fish in a casserole, stew or hotpot)	Blancmange, mousse, trifle or milk jelly
Full fat smooth yoghurt or fromage frais	Poached fish in sauce or fish pie (check for bones)	Stewed fruit or fruit crumble
Glass of fruit juice, milkshake or smoothie	Tinned fish (tuna or salmon) with mayonnaise or sauce	Full fat smooth yoghurt, fromage frais or egg custard
Scrambled egg or an omelette	Scrambled egg, cheese omelette or egg mayonnaise	Ice cream or sorbet
Finely chopped skinless sausages	Meals with a cheese sauce such as cauliflower cheese, macaroni cheese, or carbonara	Dunked biscuits in a warm milky drink
Baked beans	Inside of a jacket potato mashed with butter and cheese/mashed baked beans	Bread sticks with dips use dips generously (e.g. sour cream, hummus or salsa)
Pancakes with syrup	Creamy soup	Corn snacks or crisps (e.g., Skips, Wotsits or Quavers)

- Take your time with your meals. Make sure you chew your food well.
- Use sauces, butter, gravy, cream or custard can help to soften foods and keep them moist.
- Foods can be softened by chopping, mincing and mashing.

### Meal suggestions for a soft diet:

#### Foods to consider avoiding:

- Bread and pasties
- Tough meats
- Uncooked raw vegetables, nuts, popcorn or any other food with a hard consistency, stringy foods such as green beans and bacon. Tough skins (e.g., jacket potato skin) and crispy coatings should also be avoided.

## Puree diet

### Hints and tips for a puree diet

- Using a hand blender is the simplest way of producing pureed foods.
- Pureed foods can look more appetising if they are presented separately (e.g., separating a pureed meat casserole from the vegetables and potatoes)
- Add extra liquids and cut food into small pieces after cooking to help blend food down.
- Remove tough skins and large seeds before blending
- Use full fat milk when preparing sauces or blending foods and try adding grated cheese into dishes such as fish pie or mashed potato. Plain yoghurt or cream cheese can also be stirred into soups or vegetables after blending.

### Meal suggestions for a pureed diet:

<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Lunch/evening meals</b>	<b>Dessert/snack ideas</b>
Smooth porridge	Puree cooked meat before adding liquid, to avoid grainy texture and then add sauces such as cranberry sauce, apple sauce and tomato sauce to enhance flavour	Milk puddings (e.g., custard, rice pudding, semolina or tapioca)
Wheat biscuits soaked in milk	Chopped cooked meat such as ham can be added to sauces before blending.	Blancmange, mousse, milk jelly, or instant whip
Pureed sweetened fruit – tinned pears, stewed fruit, fruit compote	Fish with white sauce, parsley sauce, cheese sauce or tartar sauce	Tinned and stewed fruit or fruit crumble blended with cream or custard
Full fat smooth yoghurt or fromage frais	Pureed pulses (e.g., lentils, sieved beans or chickpeas). Try adding to a tomato or curry sauce, soups and casseroles. Or pureed chicken or meat curry	Smooth yoghurt, fromage frais, egg custard or crème caramel
Glass of fruit juice/ milkshake/ smoothie	Eggs (e.g., savoury egg custard or scrambled egg) well cooked with added grated cheese	Ice cream/sorbet
Skinless sausages with tomatoes and baked beans (blended well and sieved to remove skins / seeds / husks)	Potatoes, sweet potato, and butternut squash: cook and mash with butter, add grated cheese and/or full fat milk or add to stews and soups before blending	Corn snacks or light crackers that 'melt in the mouth' (e.g., Skips, Wotsits, Quavers)

## Liquid diet

It is difficult to meet your nutritional needs from a liquid diet alone; your diet will most likely need to be supplemented with oral nutritional supplements. Speak to your dietitian or GP for a prescription of oral nutritional supplements. There are different forms of oral nutritional supplements available e.g., milkshake style, Juice style, powder form supplements and supplements suitable for vegans and vegetarians.

## Sustainability

Some of our patients ask questions about sustainability. The dietitian can provide you with further information if needed. A quick and easy tip is to try to choose seasonal/local foods, look for foods with minimal packaging. Try to minimise your food waste by planning meals, cooking in bulk/batches and only buying what you need.

## Contact information / support groups / resources

If you have any further questions about the information in this leaflet, please contact the Upper GI Dietitians at QEHB:

Telephone: 0121 371 3485

Below are support groups and further resources for further support:

- Achalasia Action website (also hold regular support groups online and in person) – [www.achalasia-action.org](http://www.achalasia-action.org)
- Guts UK website – [gutscharity.org.uk](http://gutscharity.org.uk)

## Accessibility

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