



## **Dysphagia Diet: Dietary advice Soft and Bite-sized Diet Level 6**

### **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.

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 you to keep well-nourished, which is important over the course of your illness or through your treatment. This may help to speed up your recovery.

This booklet gives you some ideas on preparing soft and bite-sized 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 taken some of these options whilst receiving the Level 6 Soft and Bite Sized menu.

### **What is a Soft and Bite-Sized Diet?**

- Can be eaten with a fork, spoon or chopsticks
- Can be mashed/broken down into small pieces approximately 1.5cm/15mm with a fork, spoon or chopsticks
- Chewing is required before swallowing
- Soft, tender and moist with no separate thin liquid
- X No pips, seeds, or pith (inside skin)
- X No skins, husks, or outer shells e.g. on beans, peas or grapes
- X No hard, crunchy foods e.g. nuts or raw apples
- X No sticky foods e.g. cheese chunk, toffee, marshmallows or nut butters
- X No 'floppy' foods e.g. lettuce, cucumber, uncooked spinach leaves
- X No juicy food where juice separates off in the mouth to a mixed texture, e.g. melon
- X No stringy fruits and vegetables such as pineapple and celery

### **Food preparation**

Food should be able to be mashed/broken down with a fork, spoon or chopsticks. It is not necessary to sieve or puree any food. Food should be prepared with a thick sauce, gravy, yoghurt or custard to make it easier to chew and swallow.

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 mashed 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.

---

## **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.

## **Keeping well-nourished**

Whilst following a Soft and Bite-Sized 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/nourishing drinks a day. These can include milky drinks, soups and snacks such as yogurts, 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, vegetables and scrambled eggs
- Adding cheese and cream to soups
- Adding honey, sugar and jam to cereals, puddings and drinks, 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 may be able to advise further and suggest nutritional products to help with your weight.

## **Food preparation tips**

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

### **Meat/meat substitutes**

- Pieces of soft tender meat must be served no bigger than 1.5cm
- Serve meat finely minced, with no hard pieces
- Serve in a thick smooth sauce or gravy

### **Eggs**

- Scrambled/poached/boiled

### **Fish**

- Should be soft enough to break up into small 1.5cm/pieces be careful to look out for fish bones
- Serve in a thick smooth sauce or gravy
- Casseroles/Stews/Curries
- Must be thick
- Can contain meat, lentils, fish or vegetables in pieces no bigger than 1.5cm

### **Bread**

- No bread unless assessed as suitable by a speech and language therapist on an individual basis

### **Starchy carbohydrates**

- Potatoes can be mashed, boiled or baked (served without skin)
- Small, soft chips served with sauce

- 
- Pasta and Noodles can be cooked until soft and served with sauce
  - Yam/plantain / swallows / cassava can be boiled until soft and served with sauce
  - Rice and cous cous can be served well soaked with sauce

### **Cereal**

- Cereals should have the texture of thick smooth porridge with no lumps or the texture of fully softened wheat–biscuit breakfast cereal with milk fully absorbed
- Cornflakes/blan flakes can be made with hot milk to help soften them and ensure the milk is fully absorbed

### **Fruit and vegetables**

- Can be fresh, tinned or frozen
- Remove skin or seeds
- Cook vegetable until tender
- Harder fruits such as apples can be softened with stewing remove skins)
- Drain away any juice that has separated

### **Desserts**

- Custard and mousse pots
- Creme caramel
- Instant whip
- Smooth full fat yogurts and yogurt drinks like lassi
- Pureed fruit with cream or custard
- Rice pudding, Kheer, semolina
- Soft sponge cake with cream or custard
- Ice creams and jellies may need to be avoided if you require thickened fluids as these can become normal consistency fluids in the mouth

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

### **Meal ideas**

#### **Breakfast**

Scrambled egg

Porridge (made with corn buckwheat or oats) with milk and soft banana

Soften wheat biscuits in milk until fully soften

#### **Lunch**

Soft polenta with cheese and herbs

Soft quiche (without crust)

Soft lentil dahl (blended) with rice (well soaked)

#### **Dinner**

Soft fish pie with creamy mash

Softened pasta with creamy smooth tomatoe sauce

shredded chicken with soft vegetables in thick gravy

Boiled swallows with soup

Softened dumplings / fitters with a sauce / stew

---

## Puddings

Coconut Rice pudding

stewed fruit with custard

Kheer (soft - cooked rice with milk)

## Sustainability ideas

**Reduce Food Waste:** Use leftovers in new meals and freeze extra portions for later. Using vegetable scraps to make homemade broths or soups.

**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.

**Batch Cooking and Freezing:** Preparing meals in bulk and freezing individual portions reduces waste and saves energy.

## Nutrition and Dietetic Service

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

## Accessibility

To view this information in a different language or use text-to-speech reader visit **[www.uhb.nhs.uk](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk)**, click the yellow and black circular icon in the bottom right of the web page to open the ReachDeck toolbar and then use the search bar to search by the name of the leaflet. If you require this information in another format such as braille, please email [interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk).



## How did we do? 😊 😐 😞

If you have recently used our services we'd love to hear about your experience. Please scan the QR code or follow the link to share your feedback to help us improve our services. **Thank you.** [www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft)

