

Patient Information

Dietetics

Easy to chew diet

Your dietitian is:

Telephone number: 024 7696 6161

A good diet is needed for good health and to help you to have a healthy body weight. This is even more important when you are, or have been, unwell.

A speech and language therapist has asked you to have the safest kind of food because you've had difficulty swallowing or chewing. You shouldn't need to puree or liquidise your food, but your food should be soft enough to be cut or broken down with the side of a fork or spoon. Adding extra gravy or sauces may make your foods softer and easier to chew and swallow.

The following foods are more difficult to chew and can make you choke or cough. Avoid these high-risk foods:

- Stringy fibrous foods, such as pineapple, runner beans, celery, lettuce
- The skins of fruit and vegetables, such as grapes, peas and beans (broad, baked, soya, black eye)
- Crunchy foods, such as toast, flaky pastry, dry biscuits, crisps
- Crumbly items, such as bread crusts, pie crusts, crumble, dry biscuits
- Hard foods, such as boiled/chewy sweets/ toffees, nuts and seeds



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Which foods do I need to eat?

Try to have a different foods each day. No one food group has all the nutrients needed to maintain health.

Meat, fish and alternatives

These are foods which are high in protein. We need protein to maintain and repair our body. Protein includes the following foods:

- Meat
- Poultry
- Pate
- Fish (fresh, frozen or tinned)
- Eggs
- Yoghurt
- Milk
- Cheese and paneer
- Lentils
- Hummus
- Smooth peanut butter
- Tofu, quorn or soya

Energy foods

These foods provide fuel for the body. While you are ill or recovering from illness, your body needs more energy than normal.

- If you are underweight or losing weight, try to eat more of these foods.
- If you are overweight and eating well, try to limit how much, and how often, you have these foods.
- Foods that are high in sugar are not a good choice for people with diabetes or when you are trying to lose weight. Try to have no added sugar alternatives where possible.

Energy containing foods include:

Starchy foods:

- Cereals (soften with milk), potato, rice, pasta
- Cakes and puddings

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Fat and sugar containing foods such as:

- Butter, ghee, margarine, vegetable oils, double cream
- Squash and fizzy drinks
- Sugar, glucose, honey, seedless jam or marmalade
- Chocolate

Fruit and vegetables

These foods provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. You can use fresh, frozen, or tinned. Or you can choose fruit or vegetable juices.

Milk and dairy foods

These foods provide protein, energy and calcium. They also contain iodine, which is an important mineral.

Good sources include:

- Milk (aim for 1 pint of milk per day)
- Milk puddings or custard
- Cheese (soft or hard)
- Yoghurt, Fromage frais

Tips for soft food preparation

Meat, chicken, fish

- Steam or poach poultry and fish to keep it soft and tender
- Try slow cooking meat in liquids, such stews or casseroles
- Remove any skin, bones or gristle before serving

Potato

- Mash with milk and butter
- Instant mashed potato can be made up with milk and butter
- Try soft roast potato or soft chips that are boiled for longer before baked

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Vegetables

- Cook until soft
- Cream, cheese, butter or milk-based sauces can also be added to create vegetable mash

Fruit

- Tinned, frozen, stewed or soft fresh fruit is OK
- Peel soft fresh fruit
- Over ripe fruits can be softer, such as bananas

Meal ideas

Breakfasts

- Glass of fruit juice (thickened if needed)
- Sliced banana
- Ready Brek or other instant oat cereal
- Scrambled, poached or boiled egg
- Porridge
- Yoghurt or Fromage Frais
- Skinless sausages
- Baked beans
- Tinned chopped tomato
- Soft pancakes with syrup
- Weetabix, Cornflakes, Rice Krispies, Branflakes softened with warm milk.
- Tinned pears (juice drained), peaches, grapefruit, mandarin or stewed apple.
- If you can manage bread, try white or seedless wholemeal bread with crusts removed. You can add butter or margarine, seedless jam, seedless marmalade, honey, lemon curd, cheese spread or smooth peanut butter.

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Snack meals

- Soup (thickened if needed)
- Omelettes plain or cheese
- Poached, scrambled or boiled egg
- Quiche (avoid pastry, so take off the edges or choose crustless)
- Tinned pasta like spaghetti in tomato sauce, ravioli, macaroni cheese
- Jacket potato (no skin) or sandwich (no crusts) with:
 - Cream cheese or grated hard cheese
 - Meat or fish paste, pate or corned beef
 - Sardines, pilchards (remove any bones), taramasalata or other fish roe
 - Tuna or mashed hard-boiled eggs mixed with mayonnaise
 - Baked beans
 - Smooth peanut butter, hummus, or guacamole
 - Sandwich filler or dip from the supermarket

Main meal ideas

- Corned beef hash
- Shepherd's or cottage pie
- Faggots and thick gravy
- Fisherman's pie
- Fish with a white or butter sauce
- Spaghetti bolognese, lasagne or meat balls
- Stew or casseroles or curries using beef, lamb, pork, chicken or root vegetables. Cut meat into small pieces and cook until very soft.
- Meat or vegetables cooked in a jar or packet of sauce, crème fraiche, fromage frais, or condensed soup
- Cheese and potato bake
- Cauliflower or macaroni cheese
- Lentil dhal or Aloo gobi
- Risotto

To go with meals, you could have mashed potato, jacket potato (no skin) or soft roast potato (soaked in gravy) and well-cooked vegetables. These can be any root vegetables, broccoli, cauliflower, sprouts, courgette, fried onion or tinned tomatoes.

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Puddings

- Jelly
- Milk jelly
- Mousse
- Angel Delight
- Crème caramel
- Chocolate gateau
- Ice cream, sorbet, frozen yoghurt
- Rice pudding, semolina, sago, custard
- Sponge pudding or swiss roll and custard
- Tinned fruit (remove juice) with custard or cream or evaporated milk
- Stewed or well poached fruit (skins removed)
- Soft fresh fruit such as peach, melon, pear, banana
- Fruit fool
- Trifle
- Eve's pudding
- Soufflé
- Tiramisu

Extra snacks

- Fruit as above
- Fruit smoothies
- Any pudding as above
- Biscuits dunked in hot drinks to help soften them
- Soft chocolates or fudge

What if I don't eat much?

You may not eat much. This is okay if you are not underweight or not losing weight.

There may be times when your appetite is not so good and you lose weight. To help with this:

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Adding more to food and drinks

Please make sure any liquids are at the correct consistency which will be advised by your Speech and Language Therapist.

Fortified milk

Fortified milk can be used in place of milk or water to make coffee, hot chocolate, packet soups, milk puddings, custard, cereals and sauces.

To make fortified milk, whisk together 1-pint full cream milk with 4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder. Store for up to 24 hours in the fridge.

Double cream, evaporated milk, ice cream

- Add ice cream to milkshakes
- Use cream or evaporated milk in suitable sauces, soups, mashed potato, cereals, custard, puddings, or on jellies

Cream cheese / cheese spread

- Try to use the full fat varieties
- Add to mashed potatoes or vegetables
- Use as a sandwich filling

Sugar, syrup, honey or seedless jam

- Add to suitable cereals and puddings
- Use as a sandwich filling

Yoghurt

- Use full fat smooth or thick and creamy varieties
- Add to pureed/soft fruit or use to make yoghurt drinks

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Butter, margarine, oil, salad cream or mayonnaise

- Add to mashed potato or use butter or oil to fry foods before cooking

Nutritional supplement drinks

If you are losing weight, your dietitian may ask you to try a booster drink. They can help you to stop losing weight, or to put weight on. They do not replace meals or snacks.

Your dietitian can help you find these to buy at a supermarket, suggest homemade recipes, or help if you need a GP prescription.

Caring for your mouth when you are trying to eat and drink more

If you have been asked to eat and drink more, this might mean that you have more sweet, sticky foods and drinks. This can be bad for your mouth and teeth if you don't keep your mouth clean. Keeping your mouth clean can help stop you getting unwell with things like a chest infection.

To help with a healthy mouth and teeth:

- Go to the dentist at least once a year, tell them about your diet, ask them for help
- Brush your teeth, gums, and tongue twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, especially last thing at night.
- Try to have sweet drinks through a straw. Don't swish them around your mouth and teeth.
- Avoid sweets which are very sticky and difficult to chew or swallow. Sweets which melt away quickly can be used to boost your calorie intake and are generally better for your teeth.
- Medicines can be sugary. Try to take them at mealtimes if you can.

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More information

Please call us on 024 7696 6161 and let us know if you need more help.

Produced by the Dietetic Department, University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust.

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