

# Dietetics and Speech & Language Therapy

## Food Hierarchy

Radiotherapy and chemoradiotherapy can make eating and drinking, and therefore meal choices, quite challenging. This leaflet aims to help you change your diet as your radiotherapy progresses, and give ideas of foods and textures to try if you're finding normal meals too difficult. You may find it helpful to work through the options step-by-step, going up and down the ladder as and when you're eating changes.

### General Dietary Advice for Radiotherapy

- Radiotherapy can make your mouth increasingly sore, so avoid foods that may make this worse. This includes:
  - Acidic foods (e.g. orange/lemon-flavours, tomato-based foods, vinegar)
  - Salty or spicy foods (e.g. chilli, curries, black pepper, bacon, crisps)
  - Scratchy foods (e.g. toast, dry biscuits)
  - Alcoholic drinks, or foods cooked in alcohol
- You may also find your mouth becomes drier, so add extra moisture to foods that could stick around in your mouth or throat (e.g. bread, chocolate, pastries, mashed potato)
- Changes in taste mean you may start adding more salt, pepper or spices to foods to increase their flavour. This may irritate your mouth so try to choose blander foods whilst you are going through treatment. You can start adding more flavours again once the side effects have improved.
- Ensure you have a drink with you at mealtimes to help wash foods down, and add extra moisture to your meals with plenty of sauce or gravy.
- If you aren't able to eat much you can fortify your food to make each mouthful more nutritious e.g. by switching to full fat milk or adding extra cheese or cream. The Dietitian will be able advise you regarding this.



## Patient Information

### What foods do I need to eat?

As far as possible, try to have a variety of different foods each day as no single food group has all the nutrients necessary to maintain health. You can still choose from all the food groups when having a modified diet. Try to have energy and protein foods together at every snack and meal.

<p>Carbohydrates provide energy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bread/Chapatti*</li><li>• Rice*</li><li>• Pasta*</li><li>• Flour*</li><li>• Oats*/Muesli*/Cereal*</li><li>• Potato/Sweet Potato</li><li>• Corn</li><li>• Beans*/Legumes*/Lentils*</li><li>• Fruit</li><li>• Sweets</li><li>• Crisps</li><li>• Cakes</li><li>• Sugar</li></ul> <p>*These are a good source of fibre if you choose wholegrain or brown varieties</p>	<p>Protein for muscle maintenance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meat</li><li>• Chicken</li><li>• Fish</li><li>• Milk</li><li>• Yoghurt</li><li>• Cheese/Paneer</li><li>• Eggs</li><li>• Quorn meat/Soya mince</li><li>• Tofu</li><li>• Hummus</li><li>• Bean/Legumes/Lentils</li><li>• Nuts/Seeds</li><li>• Protein Powders</li><li>• Skim Milk Powder</li></ul>	<p>Fats provide energy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oil</li><li>• Butter</li><li>• Margarine</li><li>• Peanut Butter</li><li>• Full Fat Dairy</li><li>• Coconut Milk</li><li>• Pastries</li><li>• Fatty Meats</li><li>• Chicken Skin</li><li>• Nuts/Seeds</li><li>• Mayonnaise</li><li>• Salad Cream</li><li>• Avocado</li></ul>
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You may find that by altering what you eat you increase the amount of sugar within your diet. Ensure you protect your teeth with good oral care, as advised by your Dentist. If you are diabetic please inform your Dietitian and discuss treatment with your Diabetes Nurse.

### Fruit and Vegetables

These provide the body with a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre. You can use fresh, frozen or tinned varieties or alternatively use fruit or

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vegetable juices. Acidic or crunchy fruits such as oranges, berries or apples may be painful to swallow, so try stewing these and add custard or cream. You may find tinned fruits (e.g. peaches in syrup/pears) easier. Tomatoes can be acidic, so use caution with tomato-based soups or sauces.

You can add extra energy and protein to vegetables by adding foods from the above tables.

## Food texture levels

You may find during treatment that you need to change the texture of your food. Often people will go from Normal Foods (the hardest to swallow) and change to more easy foods as needed. Conversely, after treatment people often find that they need to work their way back up through the groups as they feel ready. It sometimes helps to view the different food textures as a ladder which you work down then come back up again.

### 1. Normal Foods

- Foods with no restriction in texture. These may be dry, stringy and crunchy.
- E.g. salad, bacon, crisps, most meat, chips, grapes, crackers, crumpets etc.

### 2. Soft Foods

- Foods with a sauce that can easily be broken down without much chewing.
- Breakfast ideas: Porridge, Well moistened cereals, scrambled eggs, poached egg, lightly toasted crustless bread, baked beans
- Meal ideas: Fish pie with sauce, cottage pie with gravy, bread soaked in soup, Pasta in creamy sauce, tuna or egg mayonnaise sandwich, corned beef hash, macaroni cheese, faggots and gravy, skinless sausage, casseroles and stews, jacket potato, well cooked vegetables
- Snack ideas: Biscuits dunked in tea, cake with custard, soft or tinned fruit ice cream, rice pudding, crackers and dip

### 3. Pureed Foods

- Smooth foods with no lumps or bits in them. Foods can be made to this consistency by blending and passing through a sieve.

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Most regular foods can be blended if they are cooked soft. You may need to:

- Add extra sauce or fluid when blending.
- E.g. yoghurt, custard, thick smooth soups, mousse, crème caramel, smooth pâtés, pureed meats, blended thick soups, smooth dips e.g. hummus or avocado

### 4. Liquid Foods

- Smooth runny foods that have a pouring consistency. These can be drunk easily from a cup.
- E.g. full fat milk or milkshakes, smoothies, smooth soup, pourable custard with extra milk, hot chocolate, yoghurt drinks, supplement drinks etc.

Your Dietitian or Speech and Language Therapist can provide you with more individual advice and recipes.

**If you need further advice regarding these meal options full information leaflets are available.**

Nutrition & Dietetics: 024 76966161

Speech & Language Therapy: 024 76966449

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 76966449 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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#### Document History

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