

## Dietetics

# Swallowing Difficulties: How to Eat Well on a Soft and Bite-sized Diet

Your Dietitian is: Telephone number: 024 7696 6161

Speech and Language Therapy inpatient team: 024 7696 5709

Speech and Language Therapy outpatient team: 024 7632 7027

### Why do I need a soft and bite sized diet?

Your Speech and Language Therapist has recommended that you have a soft and bite sized diet due to difficulties with your chewing and/or swallowing. This leaflet provides information for people who have swallowing difficulties and have been advised to adapt the texture of their food and follow a soft and bite-sized diet. You can find more information about this diet on the following website: <https://iddsi.org/resources/>

### Potential problems arising from swallowing difficulty

If there is a breakdown in the normal swallowing process there is a risk that food or liquids can pass into your lungs instead of your stomach. This is called aspiration, which can lead to the development of a chest infection or pneumonia.

The advice given to you by the Speech and Language Therapist will help avoid this, so it is very important that you follow the advice. **If you feel you are still having problems or you feel your swallowing difficulties are making you unwell, please contact your Speech and Language Therapist or GP as soon as possible.**



## What is a soft and bite-sized diet?

- Soft, tender and moist but with no thin liquid leaking/dripping from the food
- Ability to ‘bite off’ a piece of food is not required
- Ability to chew ‘bite-sized’ pieces so that they are safe to swallow is required
- ‘Bite-sized’ pieces no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size
- Food can be mashed/ broken down with pressure from a fork
- A knife is not required to cut this food
- To test food, press down with a fork until thumbnail blanches white. You want the food to remain squashed when you remove the fork.

## Do not choose foods that are:

Mixed thin and thick textures, large or hard lumps of food, hard, dry, tough, chewy, crispy, crunchy, sharp or spiky, crumbly, sticky, have stringy textures, have skins or outer shells, husks, pips/seeds, bones or gristle, round/long shaped food, crusts that have formed during cooking.

## Which foods do I need to eat?

Try to have a variety of different foods each day as no one food group has all the nutrients necessary to maintain health. By having a variety of foods you will also find your meals more appealing and enjoyable hence may find it a good way to make sure you are meeting your nutritional needs.

Food group	Suitable foods	Foods to avoid
<p><b>Meat, fish and alternatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These foods provide us with protein and are building blocks of the body</li> <li>- Try to include 2-3 portions per day</li> <li>- Cooked tender and served in pieces no</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meat and poultry</li> <li>• Fish – fresh, frozen or tinned</li> <li>• Cheese and paneer</li> <li>• Lentils</li> <li>• Hummus</li> <li>• Eggs – scrambled, fried, boiled, poached, soft cooked omelette</li> <li>• Pate</li> <li>• Smooth peanut butter</li> <li>• Well-cooked Tofu, Quorn or Soya mince</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bacon</li> <li>• Skins e.g. sausages with skin, bones, tough fat or gristle</li> <li>• Crispy fried egg</li> <li>• Scotch eggs</li> <li>• Shellfish</li> <li>• Sushi</li> <li>• Fishcakes with a crumbly coating</li> <li>• Fish in batter or breadcrumbs</li> <li>• Beans with a hard or</li> </ul>

## Patient Information

<p>bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Try slow cooking meat or chicken in stew, casserole or curry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yoghurt</li> <li>• Milk</li> </ul>	<p>tough skin e.g. baked beans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crunchy peanut butter</li> <li>• Nuts and seeds</li> </ul>
<p><b>Starchy foods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These foods provide us with energy</li> <li>- Includes carbohydrates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Ready Brek’</li> <li>• Wheat biscuits (soaked well with 75ml milk per biscuit)</li> <li>• Pasta / rice (requires sauce to soften it and hold it together)</li> <li>• Cereal with pieces no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm and texture fully softened (be sure to drain excess liquid before serving)</li> <li>• Potato – mash with milk and butter. Instant or frozen mashes are useful</li> <li>• Softened cakes and puddings e.g. rice pudding, crème caramel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pasta or rice that is sticky or gluey</li> <li>• Rice that separates into separate grains when cooked and served</li> <li>• Bread is not suitable</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fat and sugar containing foods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These foods provide us with energy and should be eaten in small amounts</li> <li>- These foods can be used to fortify foods if you are concerned about your weight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butter, ghee, vegetable oils, cream</li> <li>• Fruit juice, squash and fizzy drinks</li> <li>• Sugar, glucose, honey, seedless jam and shredless marmalade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any hard sweets</li> <li>• Any mixed consistency foods for example seeded jam</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fruits and vegetables</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These foods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruits and vegetables that can easily be mashed e.g. bananas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any hard skins or seeds</li> <li>• Any foods with</li> </ul>

## Patient Information

<p>provide our bodies with a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You can use fresh, frozen or tinned varieties</li> <li>- Cook until tender and then drain away any juice that has separated during the cooking process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steamed or boiled vegetables with final cooking size no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm. For example broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, tinned vegetables, swede, parsnips, potato</li> </ul>	<p>fibrous parts e.g. the white part of oranges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be extra careful with fruits with a high water content or where the juice separates from the solid in the mouth or during chewing e.g. watermelon and other melons</li> <li>• Stir fry vegetables are too firm and therefore not suitable</li> <li>• Avoid salad leaves, cucumber or raw tomatoes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Milk and dairy foods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These foods are an important source of protein, energy and calcium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk (thickened if required) – ensure plant-based varieties are fortified with calcium and additional vitamins</li> <li>• Milk puddings or custard</li> <li>• Cheese (soft or melted) including cottage cheese, ricotta, cheese spread, mascarpone and soft cream cheese</li> <li>• Yoghurt (natural or smooth without pieces of fruit)</li> <li>• Fromage Frais</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard cheese including cheddar, Red Leicester, Edam, Gouda</li> <li>• Crispy grilled cheese toppings</li> <li>• Stringy or chewy cheese e.g. halloumi or mozerella</li> </ul>

### What if I have a small appetite?

There may be times when your appetite is not so good and you lose weight. Here are some ideas, which may help you increase the energy and protein in your diet. If you experience any weight loss then seek advice from your GP who can refer you to a Dietitian.

### Enriching your 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 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 **one pint full cream milk** with **four tablespoons of skimmed milk powder** and **refrigerate for up to 24 hours**

### Other Ideas to increase your intake:

- Use cream or evaporated milk in suitable sauces, soups, mashed potato, cereals, custard, puddings
- Try to use the full fat varieties of cheese when adding to foods
- Add cream cheese or grated cheese to mashed potato. Make sure that the grated cheese has melted and has been stirred through before serving
- Add butter, margarine, oil, salad cream or mayonnaise to mashed potato.
- Add sugar, syrup, honey, seedless jam or shred less marmalade to suitable cereals, puddings
- Use full fat smooth or thick and creamy varieties of yoghurt. Add to pureed fruit or use to make yoghurt drinks
- Add thick custard or cream to pureed or mashed fruit.

### Meal delivery services that provide soft and bite-sized meals:

If you are interested in using a meal delivery service, please ask your dietitian for more information.

- Wiltshire Farm Foods - <https://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com/>
- Oakhouse Foods - <https://www.oakhousefoods.co.uk/specialist-nutrition.html>
- Mr Gills - <https://mrgills.co.uk/>
- Simply Puree - <https://simplypuree.co.uk/>

## Patient Information

### **Nutritional supplement drinks**

If you are still unable to eat enough food to maintain your body weight your Dietitian may suggest you try a prescribed nutritional supplement drink. However, they should not replace meals or snacks, unless your appetite is extremely poor. Your Dietitian can support you with finding suitable products to buy over the counter, suggest homemade recipes or recommend a GP prescription.

### **Oral care for people on a high calorie diet**

If you have been advised to increase your calorie intake then this might mean eating more sweet or sticky foods and drinks which are not usually recommended for a healthy mouth and teeth. A healthy mouth can reduce the risk of other infections, such as a chest infection, from occurring.

The following tips can help you balance the benefits of a high calorie diet and a healthy mouth and teeth:

- Visit the dentist regularly and ask about protective treatments for teeth
- Brush teeth, gums and tongue twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, especially last thing at night

### **Additional information**

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further advice and information.

Produced by the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6161 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

<b>Document history</b>	
Department:	Dietetics
Contact:	26161
Updated:	November 2021
Review:	November 2023
Version:	7.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/027/06