Patient Information

University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust

Dietetics

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 you need a soft and bite-sized diet

Your Speech and Language Therapist has said that you need a soft and bite sized diet because you have problems with chewing and/or swallowing.

You can find more information about this diet on the following website: https://iddsi.org/resources/

Risks of swallowing difficulty

If your swallow isn't working as usual, there is a risk that food or liquids can pass into your lungs instead of your stomach. This is called aspiration. Aspiration can lead to a chest infection or pneumonia.

A Speech and Language Therapist has asked you to have the safest thickness for you. It is very important that you follow the advice.

If you are still having problems or you are feeling unwell, please contact your Speech and Language Therapist or GP as soon as possible.

What is a soft and bite-sized diet

A soft and bite-sized diet has soft, tender, and moist foods with no thin liquid dripping from the food.

The food is soft enough if you can press it down with a fork until your thumbnail goes white and the food stays squashed. If it stays whole, it is not soft enough, don't eat it.

- The food is already in small pieces or portions
- You can chew these small "bite sized pieces"
- 'Bite-sized' pieces are no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size
- A knife is not needed to cut up the food

Do not choose foods that are:

× hard
× dry
× tough
× chewy
× crispy
× crunchy
× sharp or spiky
× crumbly
× sticky
× round or long shaped

Do not choose foods that have:

× visible lumps
× stringy textures
× skins or outer shells
× husks
× mixed thick and thin textures
× pips or seeds
× bones or gristle
× hard crusts from cooking

Food groups you need to eat

Have a mixture of foods from different food groups each day.

Meat, fish and other protein foods

- Proteins are the building blocks of the body
- Try to include 2-3 portions a day
- For cooked food, before cutting up, a portion looks like a deck of cards, 2 eggs, or the size and thickness of the palm of your hand
- Try slow cooking meat or chicken in stew, casserole or curry.

Do not have

× Bacon

× Skins e.g. sausages with skin, bones, tough fat or gristle

× Crispy fried egg

× Scotch eggs

× Shellfish

× Sushi

× Fishcakes with a crumbly coating

× Fish in batter or breadcrumbs

× Beans with a hard or tough skin, such as baked beans

× Crunchy peanut butter

× Nuts and seeds

Good choices

- Meat and poultry
- Fish – fresh, frozen or tinned
- Cheese and paneer
- Lentils
- Hummus
- Eggs – scrambled, fried, boiled, poached, soft-cooked omelette
- Pate
- Smooth peanut butter
- Well-cooked Tofu, Quorn or Soya mince
- Yoghurt
- Milk

Starchy foods/ carbohydrates

- For energy, mineral, vitamins and fibre
- A portion is about the size of your fist
- Aim to have at least one portion with each meal

Do not have

× Pasta or rice that is sticky or gluey

× Rice that stays in grains when cooked and served

× Bread

Good choices

- 'Ready Brek'
- Wheat biscuits (soaked well with 75ml milk per biscuit)
- Pasta / rice (requires sauce to soften it and hold it together)
- Cereal with pieces no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm and texture fully softened (get rid of any fluid before serving)
- Potato – mash with milk and butter. Instant or frozen mashes are useful
- Softened cakes and puddings, such as rice pudding, crème caramel

Fat and sugar containing foods

- Foods that are very high in energy
- Fats help repair the body
- Some fats have vitamins in them
- A small amount of fat is usually enough
- Try to eat less animal fats and more fish oil and vegetable fats

Do not have

- Any hard sweets
- Any mixed texture foods like seeds in jam

Good choices

- Butter, ghee, vegetables oils, cream
- Fruit juice, squash and fizzy drinks
- Sugar, glucose, honey, seedless jam and shredless marmalade
- Oily fishlike salmon, trout, sardines, and mackerel (take out bones and skin and check before you eat)

Fruits and vegetables

- Have vitamins, minerals and fibre.
- You can use fresh, frozen or tinned.
- A portion is about the size of your cupped hand.
- Cook until soft and then pour off any juice.

Do not have

× Any hard skins or seeds

× Any foods with bits, like the white part of oranges

× Fruits with a lot of juice that change when you chew them, like watermelon

× Stir fry vegetables

× Salad leaves, cucumber, or raw tomatoes

Good choices

- Fruits and vegetables that mash like bananas
- Steamed or boiled vegetables like broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, tinned vegetables, swede, parsnips, potato

Milk and dairy foods

- For protein, energy and calcium.
- Aim for 3 portions a day.
- A portion of milk is 200ml or 1/3 of a pint. A portion of cheese is about a tablespoon, or a matchbox size of hard cheese before it is cooked. A portion of yogurt is one standard 125 to 150g pot.

Do not have

× Hard cheese including cheddar, Red Leicester, Edam, Gouda

× Crispy grilled cheese toppings

× Stringy or chewy cheese e.g. halloumi or mozzarella

Good choices

- Milk (can be thickened)
- Make sure plant-based milks have added calcium and vitamins
- Milk puddings or custard
- Cheese (soft or melted) and cottage cheese, ricotta, cheese spread, mascarpone and soft cream cheese
- Yoghurt (natural or smooth without pieces of fruit)
- Fromage Frais

If you don’t eat much

There may be times where you don’t eat well and you lose weight. If you are underweight or losing weight, try to eat more fatty and high energy food to boost the energy in your diet.

If you have weight loss, ask your GP if you should be referred to a Dietitian.

Boosting your food and drinks

Make sure any liquid is at the right thickness, your Speech and Language Therapist can tell you what this is.

Fortified milk

Use fortified milk instead 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 of full cream milk** with **4 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder**. **Refrigerate for up to 24 hours**.

Other ideas to boost your diet:

- Add cream or evaporated milk to sauces, soups, mashed potato, cereals, custard, puddings.
- Try to use full fat cheese and milk.
- Add cream cheese or grated cheese to mashed potato. Make sure the grated cheese has melted and is stirred in.
- Add butter, margarine, oil, salad cream or mayonnaise to mashed potato.
- Add sugar, syrup, honey, seedless jam or shredless marmalade to cereals, puddings.
- Use full fat, smooth or thick and creamy yoghurts. Add to pureed fruit or use to make yoghurt drinks.
- Add thick custard or cream to pureed or mashed fruit.

Meal delivery services that sell soft and bite-sized meals:

Here are some meal delivery companies that sell soft and bite-sized meals:

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

Nutritional supplement drinks

If you are still losing weight, even after adding more to your food, your dietitian might ask you to try a booster drink/dessert. These can help you keep up your weight or help you put on weight.

Nutritional supplement drinks do not replace meals, drinks, or snacks. You should continue to eat and drink as usual.

Your dietitian can:

- help you to find these at a supermarket
- give you homemade recipes
- write to your GP to ask for a prescription

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

You may have been asked to eat and drink more. This might mean eating more sweet or sticky foods and drinks.

Take care of your teeth and mouth. Keeping your mouth healthy can prevent you from 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, and ask them for help.
- Brush your teeth, gums, and tongue twice a day, especially last thing at night. Brush using fluoride toothpaste.

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Document History	
Department:	Dietetics
Contact:	26161
Updated:	June 2024
Review:	June 2027
Version:	8.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/027/06