University Hospitals
Coventry and Warwickshire
NHS Trust

Speech and Language Therapy

Soft and bite-sized diet

Why do you 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 chewing and/or swallowing. If you would like to discuss this in more detail, please contact your Speech and Language therapy team.

What is a soft and bite-sized diet?

- Soft, tender and moist, but with no thin liquid leaking or dripping from the food.
- Does not require ability to ‘bite off’ a piece of food.
- Requires ability to chew ‘bite-sized’ pieces to make them safe to swallow**.**
- ‘Bite-sized’ pieces should be no larger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size.
- Food should be able to be mashed or broken down with pressure from a fork.
- A knife is not required to cut this food.

Avoid foods that are:

- Mixed thin and thick textures
- Large or hard lumps of food
- Hard, dry, tough, chewy, crispy or crunchy
- Sharp or spiky
- Crumbly or sticky
- Stringy

- Have skins or outer shells, husks, pips/seeds, bones or gristle
- Round or long in shape
- Have crusts formed during cooking

Meal ideas

- **Meat:** Cook until tender and chop into pieces no larger than 1.5 cm x 1.5 cm lump size.
- **Fish:** Cook until soft enough to break apart and serve in pieces no larger than 1.5 cm x 1.5 cm.
- **Fruit:** Soft and chopped into pieces no larger than 1.5 cm x 1.5 cm (drain any excess liquid). Do not use the fibrous parts of fruit (for example, the white parts of an orange). Be careful with fruits high in water content, where juice may separate from the solid during chewing (such as, watermelon or other melons).
- **Vegetables:** Steam or boil until tender, with pieces no larger than 1.5 cm x 1.5 cm. Stir-fried vegetables are too firm and are not suitable.
- **Cereal:** Serve with pieces no larger than 1.5 cm x1 .5 cm, with the texture fully softened. Drain excess liquid before serving.
- **Bread:** Avoid due to high choking risk**.**
- **Rice:** Requires a sauce to moisten and hold it together. The rice should not be sticky or gluey and should not separate into individual grains. A thick, smooth, non-pouring sauce may be needed to keep the rice together.

Tips for soft and bite-sized food preparation

Meat, chicken and fish:

- Steam or poach to keep soft and tender.
- Try slow cooking meat or chicken in a stew, casserole or curry.
- Remove any skins, bones, tough fat or gristle.
- Serve meat in finely minced form or in small pieces no bigger than 1.5cm.

Potato:

- Mash potatoes with milk and butter. Instant or frozen mashed potato can be useful alternatives.
- You can also scoop out the inside of a baked potato, discarding the skin.

Vegetables:

- Vegetables that are easy to mash include broccoli, potatoes, carrots, swede, cauliflower and parsnips. Tinned vegetables are also a good option for easy mashing.
- Peel and remove seeds before cooking and cook until very tender.
- Cream, cheese, butter or milk-based sauces can be added and fully mixed in.
- Avoid salad leaves, cucumber or raw tomatoes.

Fruit:

- Fruit like bananas can be easily mashed into pieces and must be no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm.
- Hard fresh fruits should be peeled and stewed before eating.
- Drain any juice that has separated during the cooking process before serving.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this leaflet, please contact the UHCW Speech and Language therapy team on 024 7696 5709.

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Document History	
Department:	Speech & Language Therapy
Contact:	25709
Updated:	October 2024
Review:	October 2026
Version:	3
Reference:	HIC/LFT/2184/17