



Adult Speech and Language Therapy
&
Nutrition and Dietetic Services

Patient Information Leaflet

Level 6 – Soft & Bite-sized Diet



The Departments of Speech and Language
Therapy & Nutrition and Dietetics do not
accept responsibility for the inappropriate use
of this information

Your Speech & Language Therapist has advised that you change the texture of your diet to make it easier and safer for you to swallow. You have been advised to have a soft and bite-sized diet.

General Description

- Food can be mashed/ broken down with pressure from a fork
- Food is soft, tender and moist, but with no separate thin liquid
- **Pieces of food should be no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm**
- Some chewing is required
- It **may** require a thick, smooth sauce, gravy or custard
(A thick fluid, gravy or sauce should hold its shape on the plate; it cannot be poured and does not spread out)
- No hard pieces, crusts, skins, gristle or garnish
- **No bread** unless assessed and advised by a speech and language therapist on an individual basis

Testing Methods

- Pieces of food should be no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm when served, which is about the width of a standard dinner fork
- To make sure food is soft enough you should be able to be cut or break the food apart with the side of a fork or spoon. It is then safest to test soft and bite-sized food using the IDDSI Fork Pressure test:
 - Place the fork on the food
 - Press down on the fork until the thumbnail blanches to white
 - Then lift the fork - the food should be completely squashed and not regain its shape

Check before serving:

- No hard pieces, crust or skin have formed during cooking/ heating/ standing
- Fluid/gravy/sauce/custard has not thinned out or separated off
- Any fluid, gravy, sauce or custard in or on food must be thick

Foods to avoid

These foods must be avoided to prevent choking:

(Please note this is **not** an exhaustive list)

- Mixed consistencies or food with loose fluid. For example, cereal with milk that has not been fully absorbed, lumpy soups and casseroles with thin gravy or sauce.
- Hard, tough, chewy, fibrous, stringy, dry, crispy, crunchy or crumbly bits - Boiled sweets, toffees, pineapple, runner beans, salad items, dry toast, pie crusts, pastries, biscuits, crisp, apples, cracker, crumble toppings.
- Foods with pips, seeds, skin, outer shell, husks, bone or gristle - Nuts, seeds, peas, beans, sweetcorn, grapes, tomatoes, onion (unless very finely chopped and well cooked until soft), fatty meat, chicken drumsticks.
- Tough meats - Steak, pork (unless minced), sausages with skins
- 'Floppy Foods' - Lettuce, baby spinach leaves, rocket.
- Fibrous foods - Celery, pineapple.
- Juicy foods – Watermelon, pineapple, grapes, mango.
- Sticky/Claggy food types – Peanut butter, marshmallows, cheese chunks.
- Large chunks - Food should be no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm pieces

Foods for Special Consideration

Some foods turn to liquid in your mouth; these foods need to be avoided if you require thickened fluids

- Jelly is **not** appropriate for anyone taking **thickened fluids**.
- Ice-cream is **not** appropriate for anyone taking **thickened fluids**

Ideas for extra flavour

- Herbs and spices, smooth mustard, smooth chutney, bottled sauce. For example, tomato, Worcestershire, brown, BBQ, salad cream, mayonnaise, etc.
- Treacle, honey, seedless jam, lemon curd
- Sauces and pickles – tomato sauce, brown sauce, apple sauce, tartar sauce, sauces and pickled with no hard lumps
- Jams & Preserves – seedless jams, lemon curd, shredless marmalade, chocolate spread

Breakfast ideas

- Fresh fruit juice – thickened to appropriate consistency if required
- Cereal: Thick porridge, instant oat cereal, Weetabix with the milk or cream fully absorbed with jams/sauces or finely chopped soft fruit
- Scrambled, poached or boiled eggs or omelette with cheese or tinned tomato
- Sausage without skins
- Yoghurt, crème fraiche or fromage frais with stewed or mashed fruit
- **If** your speech and language therapist has advised that bread is appropriate, it should be soft with no grains or crusts and well moistened with jam/marmalade/lemon curd/butter etc. Or pancakes with butter, jam, stewed fruit or yoghurt.

Light meal ideas

- Thick soup, avoiding croutons or hard lumps e.g. lentil, split pea, tomato. Some soups can be blended until a smooth consistency
- Poached, boiled, scrambled eggs or omelette
- Well cooked pasta with a thick sauce and/or grated cheese e.g. ravioli, macaroni cheese
- Cauliflower cheese
- Cheese – grated and melted into soups and sauces, plain cottage cheese
- Jacket potato without the skin with butter/tuna mayonnaise/ grated cheese
- **If** your speech and language therapist has advised that bread is appropriate, it should be soft with no grains or crusts with moist toppings e.g. cream cheese, potted meat/fish, tuna mayonnaise, egg mayonnaise, jam, mashed banana, corned beef.

Main meal ideas

- Cottage or shepherd's pie made with soft tender meat, no bigger than 1.5cm pieces and well cooked vegetables.
- Thick casserole, stew or curry (ensuring meat is tender and broken into pieces no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm pieces) well-cooked vegetables - no loose fluid.
- Hot Pot, Curry, Chilli, Skinless sausages and Mash – all cooked in a thick sauce.
- Vegetables – cooked until they are easily mashable, avoid vegetables with skins/husks
- Fish pie (topped with mash potato), tinned fish or fish in a thick sauce; the fish should be soft enough to break up into small pieces with a fork. Remember to remove all bones.
- Corned beef hash, sausages without skin, mushy peas, mashed potato – no bits
- Potatoes – cooked until they can be easily mashed. Served with thick gravy, sauce or mash with butter/margarine to soften.
- Ready prepared meals such as ravioli, macaroni cheese, spaghetti bolognese or other pasta dishes with plenty of thick sauce (avoiding crispy toppings). For example, Wiltshire Farm Food, Simply Puree, etc.

Pudding, dessert & snack ideas

- Fruit – soft fruit/stewed fruit with liquid drained (skins, pith and pips removed)
- Rice pudding, sago, semolina, custard, whips, blancmange, fruit fool, smooth fruit yoghurt, fromage frais, mousse, milk pudding with mashed or stewed fruit
- Syrup, jam, chocolate sponge pudding, plain cake, pancakes – can add cream/custard
- Soft fruit chopped into small pieces or stewed. For example, bananas, peaches
- Jams & preserves – seedless jams, lemon curd, shredless marmalade, chocolate spread
- Jelly is **not** appropriate for anyone taking **thickened fluids**.
- Ice-cream is **not** appropriate for anyone taking **thickened fluids**

Fluids

It is important to make sure you drink enough fluid to keep you well hydrated.

Six-to-eight glasses is recommended daily

*It is important to remember to **thicken your drinks** if you have been advised to do so by your speech and language therapist.

Nutrition

A soft and bite-sized diet can be low in iron, vitamin C and folate.

Iron

Include foods that are high in iron in your diet, for example:

- Fortified breakfast cereals – soften with milk
- Liver and red meats – served minced or tender and in 1.5cm x 1.5cm pieces
- Eggs
- Cocoa and chocolate – use in sauces and desserts

Vitamin C

To make sure you get enough vitamin C drink at least one glass of fruit juice or fruit drink with added vitamin C each day (thicken as required).

Folate

Foods high in folate include:

- Liver and red meat – served minced or tender and in 1.5cm x 1.5cm pieces
- Fortified breakfast cereals – softened with milk
- Yeast and beef extracts e.g. Marmite, Bovril

Constipation

If you experience constipation, try to include as many soft and bite-sized fruits and vegetables in your diet as possible. For example, turnip, carrot, stewed apples, apricot puree. Make thick soups with lentils and vegetables (blended to remove lumps if required) and ensure you are drinking enough fluids (thickened as required).

Weight Changes

Keep an eye on your weight, report any concerns you have about your weight to your GP, Dietician, Community Nurse or Practice Nurse.

If **weight loss** is a problem, try the following:

- Use full cream milk or 'fortified milk'.
To make fortified milk; add 5 tablespoons of dried milk powder to one pint of full cream milk. Use in the same way as you would use ordinary milk.
- Add cream or evaporated milk to puddings.
- Add butter or margarine to vegetables and potatoes
- Add grated cheese to soup, mash potato or sauces
- Use full fat versions of yoghurts and milk puddings

If you need to use nutritional supplements, your **Dietician** will advise which ones you should use and how much you should take.

County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

Adult Speech and Language Therapy

University Hospital Of North Durham, North Road, Durham, DH1 5TW

Darlington Memorial Hospital, Hollyhurst Road, Darlington, DL3 6HX

Bishop Auckland Hospital, Cockton Road, Bishop Auckland, DL14 6AD

Shotley Bridge Community Hospital, Consett, County Durham, DH8 0NB

Peterlee Health Centre, 2 Bede Way, Peterlee, SR8 1AD

Chester-le-Street Community Hospital, Front Street, Chester-le-Street DH3 3AT

Sedgefield Community Hospital, Salters Lane, Sedgefield, TS21 3EE

Nutrition and Dietetics

University Hospital Of North Durham, North Road, Durham, DH1 5TW

Darlington Memorial Hospital, Hollyhurst Road, Darlington, DL3 6HX

Shotley Bridge Community Hospital, Consett, County Durham, DH8 0NB

For General Enquires:

AHP Therapy Services

1st Floor, Education Building

Bishop Auckland General Hospital

Cockton Hill Road, Bishop Auckland

Co Durham, DL14 6AD

Tel: 01388 455 200

E: cdda-tr.centralbooking@nhs.net

Publication Date: March 2022

Date of review: August 2025

Responsibility for review: Speech and Language Therapy & Nutrition and Dietetics

Leaflet reference: PIL/CG/0557

Version: 1.3