

Adult Speech and Language Therapy
&
Nutrition and Dietetic Services

Patient Information Leaflet

Level 7 – Easy to Chew Diet



The Departments of Speech and Language
Therapy & Nutrition and Dietetics do not
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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 regular easy to chew diet.

General Description

- Normal, everyday foods of soft/tender texture
- Any method can be used to eat these foods (e.g. fork, spoon)
- Food particle size is not restricted; therefore foods may be a range of sizes.
- Food pieces can be smaller or bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm
- May include mixed consistencies (food and liquids together). If you are recommended thickened fluids then thicken fluid to the required level. Please talk to your Speech and Language Therapist for direction on this.
- You should be able to 'bite off' pieces of soft and tender foods and have a strong chewing ability to break it down
- **You should still avoid foods that are:** hard, tough, chewy, fibrous, have stringy textures, pips/seeds, bones or gristle

Testing Methods

Foods should be able to be cut or broken apart with the side of a fork or spoon. It is then safe to test Regular *Easy to Chew* food using one of the following tests:

- **IDDSI Fork Pressure test:**
Place the fork on the food and 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 when the fork is removed.
- **IDDSI Spoon Pressure test:**
When pieces of food are pressed with the back of a spoon to a pressure where the thumb nail blanches to white, the food squashes, breaks apart, changes shape and does not return to its original shape when the spoon is removed.

Foods to avoid

These foods must be avoided to prevent choking:

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

- Hard or dry food e.g. nuts, raw vegetables (carrot, cauliflower, broccoli), dry cakes, dry cereal
- Bread (unless assessed as suitable by your speech and language therapist)
- Tough meats e.g. steak
- Fibrous foods e.g. or pineapple, rhubarb, green beans
- Chewy and sticky e.g. sweets, cheese chunks, marshmallows, chewing gum, dried fruits, sticky foods
- Crispy e.g. crackling, crisp bacon, cornflakes
- Crunchy food e.g. raw carrot, raw apple, popcorn
- Sharp or spiky e.g. crisps
- Pith, pips and seeds e.g. apple seeds, pumpkin seed, white of an orange
- Bone or gristle e.g. chicken bones, fish bones, other bones, meat with gristle
- Stringy food e.g. green beans, runner beans, rhubarb, celery

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
- **Bread** - If your speech and language therapist has advised that bread is appropriate, it should be soft with no grains or crusts and well moistened.

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: 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 chopped soft 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.
- Pancakes with butter, jam, stewed fruit or yoghurt.

Light meal ideas

- Soup e.g. lentil, tomato. Can have mixed consistencies but avoid large, hard pieces of vegetable
- Poached, boiled, scrambled eggs or omelette
- Well cooked pasta with a 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 and well cooked vegetables.
- Thick casserole, stew or curry (ensuring meat is tender) and well-cooked vegetables
- Hot pot, curry, chilli, tender meats – all cooked in a thick sauce.
- Vegetables – boiled or steamed until they are soft
- Fish pie (topped with mash potato), fish cakes, 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.
- Potatoes – cooked until they are soft. Served with thick gravy, sauce or mash with butter/margarine to soften.
- Lasagne, ravioli, macaroni cheese, spaghetti bolognese or other pasta dishes with plenty of thick sauce (avoiding crispy toppings).

Pudding, dessert & snack ideas

- Fruit – soft fruit that can be broken into pieces with the side of a fork, e.g. bananas or stewed fruits. Remove pips and seeds and avoid tough or fibrous fruits.
- 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
- 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**

Nutrition

A regular easy to chew diet may 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 – minced or tender and finely chopped
- Eggs
- Cocoa and chocolate – use in sauces and desserts

Vitamin C

To make sure you get enough vitamin C. drink at least one 150ml 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 – minced or tender
- Fortified breakfast cereals – softened with milk
- Yeast and beef extracts e.g. Marmite, Bovril

Constipation

If you experience constipation, try to include as many 'easy to chew' fruits and vegetables in your diet as possible.

- **Vegetables** should be steamed or boiled until tender, for example, turnip, carrot. Make thick soups with lentils and vegetables (blended to remove lumps if required).
- **Fruits** should be soft enough to break apart with side of fork and spoon, for example banana, stewed apples, apricot puree.
- **Fluid** intake is also important, ensure you are drinking enough fluids (thickened as required), 6 to 8 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.

Weight Changes

If you are concerned about weight loss and/or a reduced appetite, a Dietitian can provide further dietary advice and support. Please talk to your Speech and Language Therapist, or Community Nurse or Practice Nurse or GP, who can refer you.

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

- Eat “little and often”, aim to have 3 small meals and 3 snacks daily
- Have nourishing drinks (to the recommended consistency) such as, milk, hot chocolate (made with milk), Ovaltine (made with milk), Horlicks (made with milk), latte style coffee in between meals and with snacks
- 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, milk puddings, creams and cheeses.

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

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