

## Soft & Bite-Sized Diet

### Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because you, or the person you are caring for, has been having problems swallowing food or drinks. This is called 'dysphagia'. This leaflet will help you to choose foods that can make your swallowing easier and safer.

### What is dysphagia?

Dysphagia can be one or more of the following:

- Finding it hard to swallow food or drinks
- Finding it hard to keep food and drinks in the mouth
- Finding it hard to chew food
- Food remaining in your mouth after swallowing
- Food or drink 'going down the wrong way' making you cough or choke
- Food or drink that 'goes down the wrong way' may cause a chest infection which can be very serious.

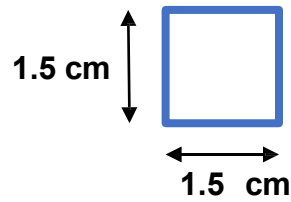
Some people who have dysphagia do not cough or choke on food or drink when it 'goes down the wrong way'. This is not always a good sign because it means food or drink can 'go down the wrong way' without the person even being aware of it. It is therefore very important to follow the advice you have been given in this leaflet and by your Speech Therapist (SLT) or Dietitian.

The following are all signs of dysphagia, and if you notice any of these please contact your speech and language therapist (SLT) or doctor.

- Coughing or choking when eating or drinking
- Gurgly, wet voice after eating or drinking
- Food staying in your mouth after swallowing
- Regular chest infections, for example, every 6 -10 weeks throughout the year

### What is Soft and Bite Sized Diet?

- Biting is **not** required
- Chewing **is** required.
- Foods only need a **moderate amount of chewing**
- Choking risk is reduced by the **small pieces**
- Food is usually eaten with a **fork, spoon or chopsticks**
- A knife is **not** required to cut up food
- Food is **soft, tender and moist**, but with no thin liquid leaking/dripping from the food
- **Bite-sized' pieces** of food that are no more than **1.5 cm x 1.5 cm** in size



- **Fork pressure test** – To test if your food is soft enough push down on the fork until your thumbnail goes white, then lift the fork to see that the food is completely squashed and does not regain its shape.



- **Soft and bite sized must pass both size and softness tests.**

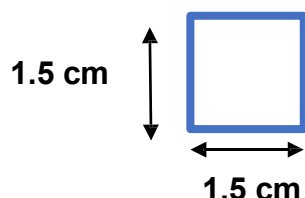
## High Risk Foods to Avoid

These can be a choking hazard

Food Characteristics to AVOID	Examples of foods to AVOID
Mixed thin and thick textures	Soup with pieces of food, cereal with milk
Hard or dry	Nuts, raw vegetables (eg carrot, cauliflower, broccoli); dry cakes, bread, dry cereal, pastry e.g. pies, sausage rolls
Tough or fibrous	Steak, pineapple, oranges, apple, grapefruit
Chewy	Lollies/candies/sweets, cheese chunks, marshmallows, chewing gum, sticky mashed potato, dried fruits, sticky foods
Crispy	Crackling, crisp bacon, cornflakes
Crunchy	Raw carrot, raw apple, popcorn
Sharp or spiky	Corn chips and crisps
Crumbly bits	Bread, dry cake crumble, dry biscuits (add sauce to make these suitable)
Pips, seeds, pith	Apple seeds, pumpkin seeds, white of orange
Food with skins or outer shell	Peas, chicken skin, salmon skin, sausage skin, pulses, chickpeas/butterbeans etc. sweetcorn, grapes, berries/currants, cucumber with skin,

Food with husks	Corn, shredded wheat bran
Bone or gristle	Chicken bones, fish bones, other bones, meat with gristle
Sticky or gummy	Nut butter, overcooked oatmeal/porridge, edible gelatin, konjac containing jelly, sticky rice cakes
Stringy/fibrous	Beans, rhubarb, celery, lettuce, uncooked spinach leaves, French/green/runner beans
Crust formed during cooking or heating	Crust or skin that forms on food during cooking or after heating, for example, cheese topping, mashed potato – this should be removed before eating.
Juicy food	Where juice separates from the food piece in the mouth, for example watermelon
Large or hard lumps of food	Casserole pieces larger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm, fruit, vegetable, meat, pasta or other food pieces larger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm

### Soft and Bite-sized Food



- **Meat** cooked so it is tender and then chopped so pieces are no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size.
- **Casserole/stew/curry:** Liquid portion (e.g. sauce) must be thick (as per clinician recommendations). It can contain meat, fish or vegetables if final cooked pieces are soft and tender and no larger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm in size.
- **Fish** cooked soft enough to break and serve in pieces no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm. No bones or tough skins.
- **Fruit** soft and chopped in pieces no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm pieces (drain any excess liquid). Fibrous part of the fruit are not suitable. Fruit may need to be stewed or mashed.
- **Vegetables** steamed or boiled with final cooked size no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm. (Stir fried vegetables are too firm and are not suitable).

- **Cereal** served with pieces no bigger than 1.5cm x 1.5cm, with their texture fully softened. Drain the extra liquid away before serving.
- **Rice, couscous, quinoa** should not be sticky or gluey and should **not** separate into individual grains when served. Requires a sauce to moisten it and hold it together – may require a smooth, thick sauce.
- **Bread:** NO regular dry bread, sandwiches or toast of any kind.

## Menu ideas – all foods to be cut into small (1.5 x 1.5 cm) pieces

### Breakfast

- Yoghurt based smoothie drink
- Overnight oats with frozen fruit/yoghurt
- Greek yoghurt, or non-dairy alternative, honey and soft tinned or fresh fruit
- Cooked breakfast for example scrambled egg, skinless sausages /ham /quorn - cut into small pieces or mashed with fork, cooked mushrooms, tinned tomatoes cut into small pieces.
- Weetabix /Oatibix (without dried fruit) with full fat milk and honey or sugar
- Instant oats /porridge with full fat milk, or non-dairy alternative and jam or syrup
- Soft drained, tinned fruit; for example peaches, pears, mandarins
- Soft fruits; for example bananas, strawberries

### Main course

- Minced beef, pork, lamb, chicken, turkey or quorn/meat free mince in gravy
- Tender casserole made with small pieces of meat/meat free mince/tofu/quorn
- Moist curry with small, tender pieces of chicken, split lentils or vegetables
- Dahl
- Shepherds/cottage pie topped with mashed potato (remove any crunchy topping) served with extra gravy
- Small, very tender pieces of offal, mutton, goat etc with gravy or sauce
- Corned beef hash with gravy
- Meat balls (cut into bite sized pieces) in gravy or tomato sauce, bolognaise
- Soft fish (cut into bite sized pieces –in parsley or cheese sauce (*carefully check for bones*)).
- Fish pie with mashed potato topping (remove any crunchy topping - (*carefully check for bones*)).
- Moist scrambled egg or mashed boiled or poached egg
- Moist risotto including foods of suitable textures
- Pasta dishes; for example ravioli, lasagne (remove any crunchy topping)
- Macaroni cheese
- Potato mashed with cheese or butter
- Soft boiled potatoes cut into small pieces in a curry sauce
- Tinned spaghetti or ravioli in tomato sauce

- Mashed sweet potato, carrots or swede, soft boiled vegetables; for example broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, carrots with white sauce or gravy (cut into small pieces)
- Cauliflower cheese with plenty of sauce or cauliflower in a curry sauce
- Ratatouille (tomato-based sauce with soft mixed vegetables; for example peppers and courgettes)
- Smooth, thick soups

**Helpful Hint** – Cook and serve food with sauces or gravy to help keep them moist

### Desserts

- Fruit /plain yoghurts or fromage frais
- Stewed fruit with yoghurt, custard, ice-cream or cream
- Sponge pudding and custard
- Bread and butter pudding with custard, ice-cream or cream
- Tapioca, semolina or rice pudding
- Potted desserts (avoid those labelled low fat, virtually fat free, low sugar or diet), custard, trifle, rice pudding, mousse, fruit fool, crème caramel
- Blancmange, Instant Whip, Angel Delight
- Ice cream and jelly (**check with your SLT whether these are suitable for you**)

### Snacks

- Pureed sandwiches - see Dysphagia Meal Prep: Wrap & Sandwich (IDDSI Level 4 Pureed) on YouTube
- Soup\* – ensure no bits/lumps/croutons.
- Pureed porridge/ready brek
- Instant whip pudding (eg Angel Delight)
- Mousse
- Smoothies\* - Ensure removal pips/seeds
- Milky drinks\*
- Yogurt/custard/smooth puddings
- Savoury dips – taramasalata/hummus/pate
- Soft cheese (cut into 1.5cm cubes if solid) e.g boursin, laughing cow, feta, dairylea
- Sliced Banana (add additional chocolate spread/smooth PB)
- Moist cake cut to 1.5cm cubes – serve with custard for additional calories
- Melt in mouth crisps- wotsits, quavers, skips
- Room temperature chocolate buttons/1.5cm sq pieces of light choc e.g. aero/flake
- Ripe fruits cut into small chunks – avoiding fibrous fruits eg pineapple and fruits such as melon/watermelon - can add yogurt, evaporated milk, custard etc for additional calories
- Trifle
- Rice pudding

\* SLT may have advised that you/your family member require thickened fluids. If so, these items may need to have added thickener to ensure appropriate thickness

## Nutrition and Fluid

On a soft and bite-sized diet it is important to eat foods from all of the food groups in line with the **NHS Eat Well Guide** - protein, carbohydrate, fats, fruit and vegetables. This will help to make sure you get all the nutrients you need to promote recovery and stay healthy. You can read more about nutrition by visiting [www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well).

Each day include 6-8 mugs or glasses of **fluid** (including all hot and cold drinks) to help support your skin and kidneys and stay hydrated. Do this even if you don't feel thirsty – thirst is often a poor indicator of nutritional intake.

Also follow the advice of your Speech Therapist if you need to **thicken your drinks** – sometimes this is only for a short period of time.

## Fortifying food

On a soft and bite-sized diet you may need to increase the nutrient and energy content of your food and drink to get enough calories and protein.

Food	Foods to add to increase calories / protein
To soups (fresh, tinned, powdered)	Grated cheese, dried skimmed milk powder, evaporated milk, cream, crème fraîche
To sauces	Full fat yoghurt, cream, grated cheese, smooth nut butter, butter, ghee, oils (you can use different flavours)
To vegetables	Grated cheese, full fat natural yoghurt or mayonnaise, butter, ghee or margarine, oils eg. olive, rapeseed, flavoured oils
To milk (full fat if possible)	Blend with 3-4 tbsp of skimmed milk powder to make <b>Fortified Milk</b> . Use this to make hot drinks, flavoured milk, milkshakes and in sauces

Note: If you need to have **thickened fluids**, you may need to add thickener to drinks/ liquids in addition to ingredients suggested below.

## Ready prepared meals

If preparing **soft and bite-sized** meals is difficult for you or your carer, you could try ready prepared meals delivered to your door. The following offer a variety of meal options:

- Mrs Gills Kitchen (020 8807 6584) [www.mrsgills.co.uk](http://www.mrsgills.co.uk)
- Oakhouse Foods (0333 370 6700) [www.oakhousefoods.co.uk](http://www.oakhousefoods.co.uk)
- Wiltshire Farm Foods (0800 077 3100) [www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com](http://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com)

## References

- International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative – <https://iddsi.org>
- NHS Live Well – [www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well)

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

## How can you help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

## Patient Advice Sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email [bht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:bht.pals@nhs.net)