

# Healthy Balanced Soft Diet

## Head & Neck Dietitians

This leaflet has been designed for people who are having difficulty chewing or swallowing and may find softer foods easier to manage. It is designed for people who are not struggling to maintain their weight or oral intake. It is intended for people who are eating well who want to maintain a 'healthy lifestyle' and it can aid in planned weight loss if this is needed.

## What are soft food options?

As the name suggests, 'soft food' should be: soft, tender and moist but may need some chewing.

## What is not a 'soft food'?

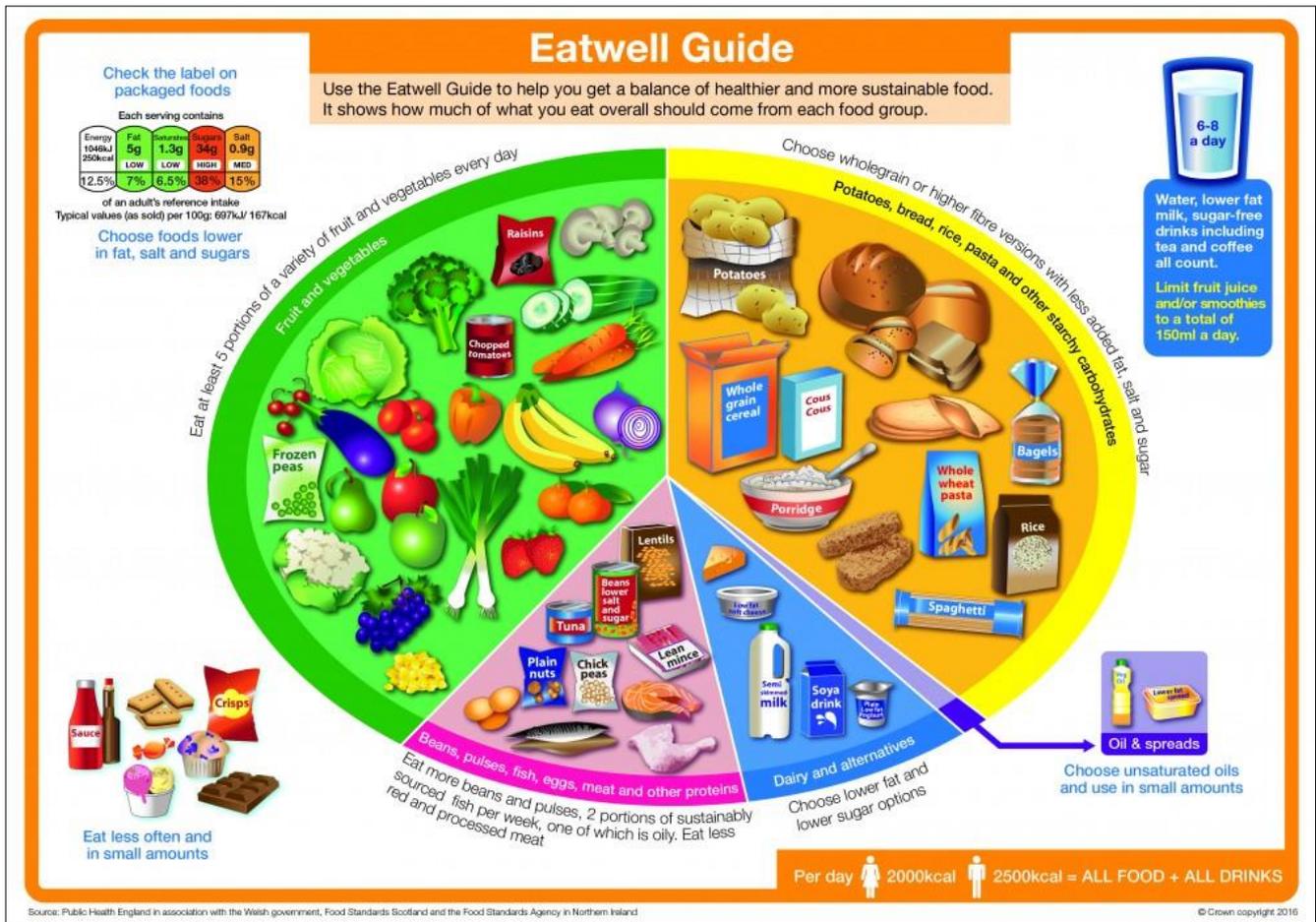
- Hard, fibrous or stringy foods (such as nuts, celery, runner beans and steak)
- Dry or crumbly foods (like biscuits or pastry)
- Foods with skins, pips or hard lumps (like orange segments, peas, sweet corn or potato skins)
- Chewy foods such as doughy bread and pizzas.

## World Cancer Research Fund UK Recommendations

1. Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight
2. Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day
3. Avoid sugary drinks and limit the consumption of high calorie foods
4. Eat more of a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains and pulses
5. Limit intake of red meat and avoid processed meat
6. Limit alcoholic drinks to one a day
7. Limit consumption of salty foods
8. Do not use nutritional supplements to protect against cancer
9. After treatment, cancer survivors should follow the recommendations for cancer prevention

# Balanced Eating

The Eatwell Guide shows how much of what we eat overall should come from each food group to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.



- Eat 5 a day—include vegetables with each meal and fruit as a snack
- Have starchy foods with each meal choosing wholegrain more often
- Eat some protein rich foods such as meat, chicken, eggs, and fish. Beans, cheese, tofu or lentils are good sources of protein.
- Include milk, cheese, yoghurt or other dairy alternatives
- Include healthy fats.
- Limit foods high in fat, sugar and/or salt
- Drink 6-8 cups/glasses of fluid a day



## Fruit and vegetables

Should make up around a third of everything you eat each day. Aim to eat at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day.

Choose from fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced.

They are a great source of fibre and vitamins and minerals. By choosing a variety of colours and types you can ensure you are benefitting from a wide variety of vitamins and minerals.

Remember that fruit juice and/or smoothies should be limited to no more than a combined total of 150ml per day.

## Starchy foods and wholegrains

Are a good source of energy, vitamins and minerals and should make up around a third of the food we eat:

Bread, chapatti, potato, rice, yams, pasta, oats and cereals.

Choose wholegrain varieties where possible as these will be better sources of fibre. Fibre is important for healthy and regular bowels and may also help reduce cholesterol and keep us full to prevent overeating.



## Dairy and alternatives

Are a great source of calcium for strong bones and also a good source of protein.

Choose low fat/sugar options to aid a healthy weight as they can be high in calories. Dairy examples include milk, cheese and yoghurts.

A good example of alternatives is calcium fortified soya milk/yoghurts, almond milk, and rice milk.

## Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins

These are high in protein, which keeps us feeling full and our immune system healthy.

Eat more lentils and beans as these are lower in calories and also provide fibre. Fish is a good source of protein, aim for at least two portions of fish every week – one of which should be oily, such as salmon or mackerel. Oily fish contains omega-3 fatty acids which may be protective of heart disease.

Try to avoid cooking meats at high temperatures such as frying or barbecuing. Choose lean varieties of meat and chicken and limit processed meats like sausages, salami and bacon.





## Unsaturated oils and spreads

Fat is essential to good health and aids the absorption of some important vitamins like A, E, D and K.

Unsaturated fats are healthier fats and include vegetable, rapeseed, olive and sunflower oils. Limit saturated and trans fats and replace these with unsaturated fats.

Remember fats are high in calories and both 'good' and 'bad' fats are the same amount of calories. It is therefore advised to limit how much fat we add to our diet.

## Foods high in fat, sugar and/or salt

Are not needed in the diet and should be eaten less frequently and in small portions.

These foods include chocolate, cakes, biscuits, sugary soft drinks, and butter.



## Healthy Tips

- Have planned regular meals. Research shows that those people who have planned regular meals maintain healthier weight and/or achieve more successful weight loss.
- As part of your eating plan have planned snacks. If you have a long gap between meals this can result in larger portions at your evening meal. Try a planned healthy snack in-between. If you often binge eat in the evening, plan a low calorie/healthy snack.
- Try to portion your dinner plate with 1/3 vegetable, 1/3 starchy foods and 1/3 protein. If you need to lose weight try ½ a plate vegetables/salad, 1/4 starchy foods and 1/4 protein.
- Portion sizes are key to maintaining a healthy weight. Whether it's a healthy piece of fruit or a biscuit, if you eat too much you will put on weight.
- Keep active. Activity burns calories and has lots of health benefits including reducing your risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer. Walking, swimming, cycling, weight training, sports/activities and dancing are good examples.

## Breakfast ideas

- Porridge or Ready brek® with fruit
- Cereals (avoid nuts and granola) with milk and yoghurt, choose high fibre low sugar varieties
- Beans, skinless sausages, tinned tomatoes, black pudding

- Omelettes or scrambled eggs with grated low fat cheese and smoked salmon
- High protein yoghurt with tinned, fresh or stewed fruit

Consider portion sizes with cereals (a bowl full is usually too much), choose lean meats and low fat dairy.

## Lunch and Dinner Ideas

### Meat and poultry

- Lean minced meat dishes such as cottage pie, meatballs or Bolognese
- Lasagne or moussaka
- Skinless sausages with mash and gravy.
- Casseroles and stews made with soft meat and plenty of gravy.
- Small portions of tinned meats such as corned beef, chopped ham and pork, tinned sausages and beans
- Corned beef hash

Choose lean meats, cut off excess fat and grill and bake instead of frying where possible

### Fish

- Fish pie / fish cakes
- Frozen fish in sauces (boil in the bag)
- Tinned salmon, tuna or mackerel

### Eggs and Cheese

- Scrambled eggs and omelettes
- Macaroni or cauliflower cheese
- Quiche without crusts.
- Tinned spaghetti with cheese.

Use low fat dairy or strong tasting cheese and use smaller portions. Grated cheese gives the impression of a larger portion.

### Potatoes, rice and pasta

- Pasta well cooked with plenty of sauce
- Ravioli
- Rice well cooked with plenty of sauce
- Risotto
- Potatoes cooked until soft
- Potato dauphinoise (sliced potato roasted in cheese & cream)
- Jacket potatoes with grated cheese, baked beans, tuna and mayonnaise or cottage cheese
- Mashed potato with a small amount of butter, milk or gravy.

Consider portion sizes, these starchy carbohydrates should make up no more than 1/3 of your plate and if you are trying to lose weight, 1/4. If having with a sauce, ensure low calorie and low salt (Try making your own).

### **Fruit and vegetables**

- Fresh fruit which is soft and mashable
- Frozen or tinned fruit (in juice instead of syrup) which is soft and mashable
- Soft fruits such as banana or avocado
- Fresh vegetables, cooked until soft
- Frozen or tinned, cooked until soft
- Mashed vegetables
- Vegetable soup with no hard lumps

Should make up half of your plate and are a good low calorie snack option.

## **Healthy Snack Ideas**

Have a maximum of two snacks a day. Try to choose low calorie snacks or snacks that curb your hunger.

- Rice crackers and low fat cheese spread, a thin layer of nut butter or hummus
- Handful portion of soft fruit
- Low fat yoghurt
- A slice of soft white or wholemeal toast (no wholegrains or seeds) with boiled egg

## **Healthy Eating on a budget**

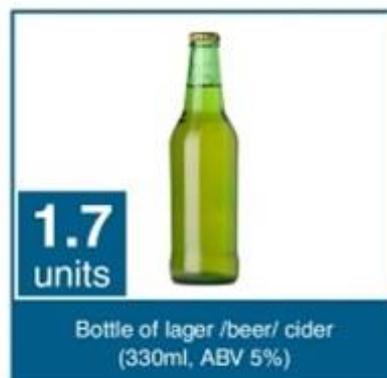
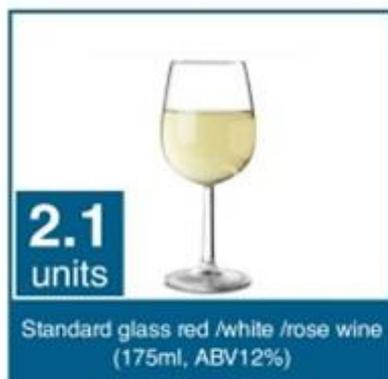
The best way to eat healthily on a budget is to keep a well-stocked food cupboard and to buy and make food in bulk:

- Buy easy to store products such as frozen, dried and tinned foods (vegetables, sardines, tuna, baked beans, eggs, dried pasta).
- Plan ahead, instead of eating out which is always more expensive. Take breakfast to work, make sandwiches or salads for lunch or have leftover dinner.
- If you are on a budget, cheaper protein options such as tinned meats/fish, beans, pulses and high protein yogurts are good choices.
- **There is no research to support the claims of super foods and supplements** so save your money.

## **Alcohol**

- Limiting alcohol is essential to healthy living. Having large quantities in one session is worse for your health than a small amount each day
- Try to have several alcohol free days per week.

- Both men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units per week
- Try and spread this over 3 or more days



## Quit Smoking

Cigarette smoking is detrimental to health. Regardless of the amount you smoke, stopping smoking all together will improve your health.

- Nicotine and carbon monoxide cause blood vessels to constrict (narrow) reducing the flow of blood to the tissues in the mouth and throat. This slows the rate of wound healing, makes mucositis worse and can permanently affect voice quality.
- People who undergo less extensive surgery or treatments are more likely to relapse and start smoking again. Common triggers for relapse are stressful situations and social triggers, so we realise that sometimes just advising you to stop smoking is not enough. Help is available....

## **SMOKEFREE NHS**

Helpline: 0300 123 1044

Website: <http://smokefree.nhs.uk/>

## **Wandsworth local service**

Freephone: 0800 389 7921

Website: <http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/stopsmoking>

## **Croydon local service**

Freephone: 020 8726 6000

Website: <https://www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/phealth>

## **Cookbooks and pre-prepared meals**

### **Brenda's Easy-To-Swallow Cookbook**

Published by Consilience Media, in association with the Mouth Cancer foundation. November 2009

Available at: [www.mouthcancerfoundation.org](http://www.mouthcancerfoundation.org)

### **Soft Foods for Easier Eating—Cookbook**

Easy-to-follow recipes for people with chewing and swallowing difficulties

By Sandra Woodruff, RD, and Leah Gilbert-Henderson

Square One Publishers (2007). ISBN 0757002900

[www.dysphagia-diet.com](http://www.dysphagia-diet.com)

### **The I-Can't-Chew Cookbook: Delicious Soft Diet Recipes for People with Chewing, Swallowing, and Dry Mouth Disorders**

By J. Randy Wilson. Hunter House (2003).

ISBN 0897934008

### **Hamlyn All Colour 200 Slow Cooker Recipes**

Hamlyn - Octopus Publishing Group (2009)

ISBN 0600620697

### **Wiltshire Farm Foods**

Soft meals delivered to your door

[www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com](http://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com)

Freephone: 0800 773 773 (7 days per week)

## Useful references

### British Dietetics Association

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home>

### Cancer Research UK

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/coping/physically/diet-problems/managing/soft-diet>

Freephone: 0808 800 4040 (9am - 5pm)

### Mouth Cancer foundation

[www.mouthcancerfoundation.org/get-info/patients-guide](http://www.mouthcancerfoundation.org/get-info/patients-guide)

[www.rdoc.org.uk/](http://www.rdoc.org.uk/)

Free helpline: 01924 950 950

Email: [info@mouthcancerfoundation.org](mailto:info@mouthcancerfoundation.org)

### Macmillan

[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Free call: 0808 808 0000 (Mon-Fri 9am-8pm)

### The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust

<https://www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/your-care/royal-marsden-help-centre/patient-information-booklets>

Freephone: 0800 783 7176

## Contact us

### Head and Neck Dietitians

The Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

St George's Healthcare NHS Trust

Blackshaw Road

London

SW17 0QT

Tel. 020 8725 0518

Fax. 020 8725 1951

### Macmillan Head & Neck Clinical Nurse Specialist

Tel. 020 8725 3263

### Speech & Language Therapists

Tel. 020 8725 1163

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111



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