

Making the most of your 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. This leaflet is intended to help you choose suitable foods, adapt your own dishes and choose a wide variety of foods to ensure you are meeting your needs.

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.

Making the most of your meals

This advice is suitable if you are experiencing a poor appetite, losing weight unintentionally and/or are not managing your usual diet. It provides advice on how to maximise your calories and protein.

- Eat "**little and often**" – this means eat small meals and snacks throughout the day, every two to three hours.
- **Fortify** meals by **adding** butter/spread, oils, cream, cheese, evaporated/condensed milk, honey, jam, and/or sugar to suitable meals.
- Choose foods which are **highest in energy** (calories) such as full fat foods rather than diet and/or low fat alternatives.
- Drink **nourishing drinks** such as full fat (blue top) milk, hot chocolate, Horlicks®, Ovaltine®, smoothies and/or nutritional drinks prescribed by your Dietitian.
- Include foods **high in protein** at every meal time (eggs, cheese, pulses, beans, milk, yoghurt, and/or smooth peanut butter).
- Choose a **variety** of foods to get the nutrients you need. Try to have different meals and snacks each day.
- Stay well **hydrated** by sipping fluids throughout the day. However try not to drink a glass/cup of fluids before meals as this can make you feel full.

Nourishing Drinks

You may have had one of the following nutritional drinks prescribed by the Dietitian to increase your energy (calorie) intake, prevent weight loss and supplement your nutrition:

- Some examples include; Nutricia Fortisip Bottle®, Fortisip 2kcal®, Fortisip Compact®, Fortisip Compact Protein®, Scandishake®, Abbott Ensure Plus®, Aymes Shake®, Fresubin® Original, Altraplen Protein®.

Other nutritional drinks can be purchased over the counter or made at home if you are worried about weight loss or finding eating difficult:

- Complan®, Nestlé Meritene® soups or Meritene® shakes
- Homemade smoothies with milk, ice-cream, tinned or fresh fruit
- Ovaltine®, Horlicks® or Hot chocolate

Enriched milk; 2-4 tablespoons of Skimmed Milk Powder mixed into one pint of Full Fat Milk. (Use in soups, milkshakes, mashed potato, in breakfasts, in homemade desserts etc.)

Fortifying Meals ideas

- Add lots of cheese to cottage pie, meatballs, Bolognese or lasagne
- Add cream, evaporated milk, condensed milk in teas/coffees, soups, yogurts and breakfast cereals.
- Add a knob of butter to soft meats, soup, potatoes and vegetables and add your favourite oils to salads.
- Have plenty of butter, jam, honey, soft cheese and smooth nut pastes on suitable bread/toast
- Add cream, honey and/or jam to yoghurts and puddings
- Add cream, butter, full fat yoghurt to sauces

Snack/pudding options to help you manage 'little and often'

- Yoghurt and yoghurt drinks, ensure full fat and look for high protein options
- Hummus, soft cheeses and nut butters on suitable breads
- Rice pudding
- Jelly and custard
- Biscuits dunked in hot drinks
- Crisps that melt e.g. Quavers or Wotsits
- Tinned, frozen or pureed fruit with ice-cream/cream or yoghurt.
- Milky puddings e.g. Semolina, Tapioca.
- Mousses
- Trifles
- Sponge cake with cream or custard.
- Crème caramel
- Angel Delight
- Ice-cream/Sorbet

Breakfast ideas

- Porridge or Ready brek® with honey or pureed fruit.
- Cereals (e.g. Weetabix®, rice krispies, and cornflakes) fully soften with full fat milk.
- Soft boiled/ scrambled or poached eggs with cheese or beans.
- Beans, skinless sausages, tinned tomatoes, black pudding.
- Pancakes with sweet or savoury toppings.
- Full fat yoghurt* with tinned, fresh or stewed fruit.
- Fruit or yoghurt smoothies

*High protein yoghurts such as Fage® Total, Skyr®, Danio® and/or Liberté® are a good source of protein. If only available in zero/low fat add cream to add calories and taste. Other brands are also available.

Savoury meal ideas

Meat and poultry

- 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.
- Tinned meats such as corned beef, chopped ham and pork, tinned sausages and beans
- Corned beef hash

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.

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 and cream)

- Jacket potatoes with grated cheese, baked beans, tuna and mayonnaise or cottage cheese
- Mashed potato with plenty of butter, cream or gravy.

Fruit and vegetables

- Fresh fruit which is soft and mashable
- Frozen or tinned fruit 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 with butter or margarine
- Vegetable soup with no hard lumps

Swallowing safety

Follow this advice when you eat, drink and take medication.

- Sit upright, in a chair if possible, whilst you eat and drink and for at least half an hour afterwards
- You should be alert when you eat and drink
- Make sure you only have one mouthful of food or fluid at a time
- Swallow food and clear your mouth before you take the next mouthful. This might mean swallowing twice
- Don't rush mealtimes. Take time in between mouthfuls
- Takes sips of fluid every three to four mouthfuls if needed
- At the end of each meal, make sure your mouth is empty and check for any food in the cheeks
- If you feel something has gone down the wrong way, try to clear it with a cough
- Rinse your mouth with warm salt water at the end of a meal to clean the mouth
- Make mealtimes a pleasant and relaxed experience

If you already have exercises and specific advice from your Speech and Language Therapist please follow these as prescribed.

If you require any further information about eating and drinking safely contact the Speech and Language Therapy department.

Cookbooks and 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

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

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

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

www.rdoc.org.uk/

Free helpline: 01924 950 950

Email: info@mouthcancerfoundation.org

Macmillan

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

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For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

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

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

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

