

# 4 Pureed

## Information for patients with dysphagia and their carers

**This leaflet aims to answer your questions about having a pureed diet recommended to you by your speech and language therapist. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your speech and language therapist, GP or nurse.**

### What is dysphagia?

Dysphagia is the medical term for swallowing difficulties. Some people with dysphagia have problems swallowing certain foods or liquids, while others can't swallow at all. Your speech and language therapist has recommended changing the consistency of your liquids to make them safer to swallow.

### What is a pureed food?

Pureed food is smooth and doesn't need to be chewed. Most food can be pureed by blending it with gravy, sauces, milk or water.

You can change the thickness of the puree by adding liquid.

Most food can be pureed using one of the following:

- Liquidiser
- Food processor
- Hand-held blender, ideal for small quantities
- Sieve, to push food through to remove pips, lumps and skin.

Pureed food:

- Is usually eaten with a spoon (though a fork is possible)
- Cannot be drunk from a cup
- Cannot be sucked through a straw
- Does not require chewing
- Can be piped, layered or moulded
- Shows some very slow movement under gravity but cannot be poured
- Falls off a spoon in a single spoonful when tilted and continues to hold shape on a plate
- Has no lumps
- Is not sticky
- Any liquid must not separate from the solid
- No biting or chewing is required.

This leaflet will help you to choose suitable food, adapt your own dishes and get the most nourishment from your meals. **Please note that baby food is NOT suitable for adults.**

## How do I puree food?

Use strongly flavoured fresh ingredients, herbs and spices to give the puree lots of flavour.

Chop or mash the food by hand with a fork, then add a small amount at a time to a liquidiser and blend until all the lumps are removed.

Add milk, water or sauce until the puree is smooth. Add more fluid to make the puree thinner if you prefer.

Sieve to remove any remaining fragments of food.

Don't mix different foods together – keep the flavours separate to give you a more pleasant meal.

You can use food colourings or blend in beetroot, blackcurrants, blackberries or tomato puree to make your purees look and taste better.

If your food has cooled down or is taken from a frozen batch, make sure it is reheated to the right temperature.

## How do I swallow pureed food safely and comfortably?

Sit upright in a chair while you eat and for at least half an hour afterwards if you can.

You should be awake and fully alert when you eat and drink. Try and make your mealtimes pleasant and relaxed.

Only have one mouthful of food or fluid at a time. Swallow food and clear your mouth between mouthfuls. You may need to swallow twice.

Don't rush mealtimes - take frequent pauses during the meal and take sips of fluid with your food

If you feel something has gone down the wrong way, try to clear it with a cough and have a short break from eating and drinking. If this is happening frequently, please contact your speech and language therapist or GP.

At the end of each meal, make sure your mouth is empty and check for any food in your cheeks.

If your speech and language therapist has already given you exercises or specific advice please follow this, and contact speech and language therapy if you need any further support or information.

## How do I make sure I have a balanced diet?

To get all the nutrients you need, make sure you include a wide variety of food in your meals and snacks each day.

Have some high protein food at every meal time, e.g., meat, chicken, fish, eggs, cheese, pulses, legumes, milk, yoghurt, nut pastes.

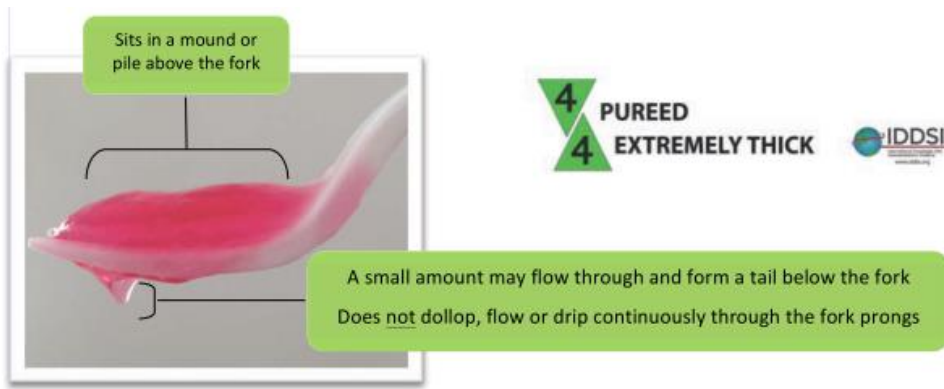
Stay well hydrated by sipping fluids throughout the day.

## What should I do if I'm not sure if a food fits the criteria?

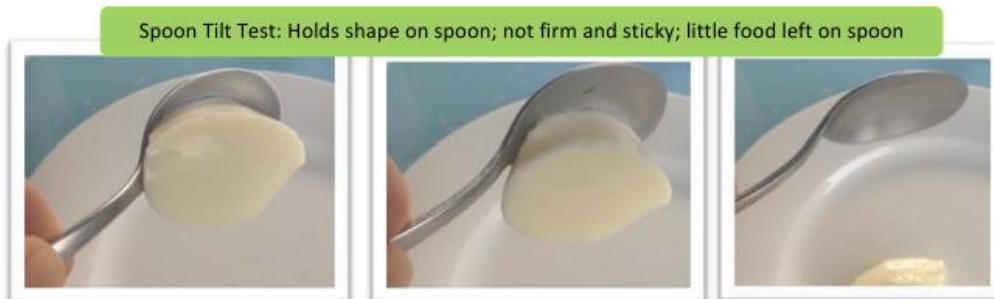
We have given you some examples of foods that would fit the criteria, but if you are not sure there are a few tests you could try at home:

**Fork pressure test:** The prongs of a fork can make a clear pattern on the surface and/or the food retains the indentation from the fork. There are no lumps.

**Fork drip test:** The food sits in a mound/pile above the fork; a small amount may flow through and form a tail below the fork prongs, but it does not flow or drip continuously through the prongs of a fork



**Spoon tilt test:** The food should be cohesive enough to hold its shape on the spoon. A full spoonful must plop off the spoon if the spoon is tilted or turned sideways; a very gentle flick may be necessary to dislodge the sample from the spoon, but the sample should slide off easily with very little food left on the spoon, i.e., the sample should not be firm and sticky. It may spread out slightly on a flat plate.



**Finger test:** It is just possible to hold a sample of this texture using fingers. The texture slides smoothly and easily between the fingers and leaves noticeable residue.

**Indicators that the puree is too thick:** It does not fall off the spoon when tilted and sticks to the spoon.

## Food examples

### Breads and cereals – for energy and fibre

| Food                     | Choose  | Avoid   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Breakfast cereals</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thin rolled oats e.g., Ready Brek with pureed fruit, honey or syrup</li> <li>Weetabix soaked in plenty of hot or cold milk, stirred to make it smooth</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Porridge oats</li> <li>Muesli or cereals with clusters</li> <li>All other cereals</li> </ul> |
| <b>Bread</b>             | <b>Bread is not appropriate for this diet</b>   | <b>All types of bread</b>   |
| <b>Pasta</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overcooked pasta that is very soft. Add sauces e.g., tomato or cream, plus extra milk, cheese or cream, <b>then blend well until the whole dish is smooth</b></li> <li>Try adding sundried tomato puree, pesto, parmesan cheese or smoked pureed ham and blend into the pasta</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any pasta that does not puree completely smooth</li> </ul>                                   |

|                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
|                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spaghetti Bolognese or macaroni cheese purees</li> </ul>   |  |
| <b>Rice</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pureed risotto with plenty of sauce to ensure the right consistency</li> <li>• Pureed rice pudding with cream, jam or honey</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grains of rice</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Potatoes</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potato can be easily mashed or blended to a smooth puree</li> <li>• Cook thoroughly then mash with margarine, milk or grated cheese and add to a blender or food processor</li> <li>• Mix in more milk to make smooth and get rid of any lumps</li> <li>• Instant potato can also be used</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any potatoes cooked with crispy or hard parts that may not puree completely smooth</li> </ul> |

### Meat, fish and alternatives – for protein

| <b>Food</b>                            | <b>Choose</b>   | <b>Avoid</b>  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Meat</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All types of meat and poultry can be pureed</li> <li>• Cook until soft and remove any skin, bones, fat or gristle</li> <li>• Blend meat on its own to make a pate</li> <li>• Cook meat and puree with tinned soup, sauces, curry powder, wine, chutney, mustard, gravy or stock</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gristly, stringy, chewy, tough meat that may cause lumps</li> <li>• Bacon</li> </ul> |
| <b>Fish</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh, frozen or tinned fish can all be pureed</li> <li>• Cook until soft and then flake or mash the fish, remove all the bones and blend into the puree</li> <li>• Blend with cheese sauce, parsley sauce, tomato sauce, condensed soup, mayonnaise, lemon juice etc.</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish with bones</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Eggs</b>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooked eggs blended with cheese, margarine, milk or cream</li> <li>• Add sauces, lemon, herbs, spices etc.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single pieces of egg</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Beans, pulses, lentils and nuts</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skinless beans, pulses and lentils only, pureed</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nuts should be avoided</li> </ul>  |

## Dairy foods – for protein and calcium

| Food                       | Choose   | Avoid  |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Milk</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All types of milk if suited to your diet</li> <li>• Milkshakes / flavoured milk</li> <li>• Pureed milk pudding</li> <li>• Buttermilk, evaporated and condensed milk</li> <li>• Fruit smoothies, well blended. No bits (see pg. 8)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit smoothies with lumps of fruit</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Cheese</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheese sauces</li> <li>• Soft cheeses, blended such as cottage cheese and ricotta</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheeses that contain nuts or fruit</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Yoghurt</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smooth thick yoghurt with no fruit pieces</li> <li>• Set yoghurt, Greek yoghurt, fromage frais</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yoghurt with fruit</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Milk based desserts</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cream, custard, mousse, crème caramel, tiramisu</li> <li>• Cheesecake with the base removed and extra milk/cream</li> <li>• Egg custard with the pastry removed</li> <li>• Tinned or packet puddings that are liquidised</li> <li>• For flavour add nutmeg, cinnamon, jam, honey, chocolate powder or chocolate spread before blending</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Please note that ice cream, sorbet and jelly are not suitable for those on thickened fluids</b></li> </ul> |

## Fruits and vegetables – for vitamins, minerals and fibre

| Food              | Choose   | Avoid   |
|-------------------|--|---|
| <b>Fruit</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pureed fruit, with all the skins, pips and pith, stones and skin removed</li> <li>• Add milk or cream to make it smooth</li> <li>• Liquidised tinned or stewed fruit with fruit juice, syrup, cream, milk, yoghurt or evaporated or condensed milk</li> <li>• Pureed cooked apple, pear or plums</li> <li>• Fruit fools, with no lumps</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stringy, fibrous textures that do not blend well e.g., pineapple</li> <li>• Fruit skins</li> </ul>                             |
| <b>Vegetables</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh tinned or frozen vegetables can all be pureed</li> <li>• Peel and cut the vegetables into small pieces, remove seeds or skin, cook until soft, drain off any water and puree in a blender until smooth</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fibrous, stringy vegetables like celery and cabbage</li> <li>• Vegetable skins e.g., broad beans, baked beans, soya</li> </ul> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add butter or margarine, grated cheese, milk, cream and herbs for extra flavour</li> <li>• Mixed vegetable risotto</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>beans</li> <li>• Husks</li> </ul> |
|--|--|--|

**Some foods can be very difficult to swallow safely and may need extra care or be avoided all together.** Please contact your speech and language therapist for more advice.

Foods that can be difficult to eat are:

- Mixed consistency foods, e.g., soup with lumps or bits and cereals which do not blend with milk, such as muesli
- Crunchy foods e.g., toast, crisps, flaky pastry
- Crumbly foods e.g., pie crusts, crumbles, biscuits
- Hard foods e.g., boiled or chewy sweets or toffee, nuts or seeds

**Soup:** all soup should be liquidised smooth with no lumps, strings or bits. You may need to sieve the soup to remove these. Make up condensed and packet soups with milk or cream. Please note that soup may not be right for you if you are recommended to have a thickened fluid diet, please ask your speech and language therapist if you are not sure.

## How can I make my pureed meals look good?

Food that looks good helps with your appetite.

Pureed food lacks texture and so can look boring, but you can improve this by:

### Presentation

Puree and serve different foods separately on the plate

Garnish to liven up meals, try sprinkling with paprika or pepper

Food should be eaten with a fork and should not drop between the prongs of the fork. This is a good way of checking that you have the right consistency for all your food.

### Flavour

Vary the flavours of meals by adding herbs, spices, lemon juice or sauces e.g., soy sauce, curry sauce, mint sauce or ketchup.

### Colour

Choose different coloured foods to make meals look good.

Try mixing bright coloured vegetables with paler foods such as creamed potato and cheese.

### Temperature

Re-heat to the right temperature to make sure your food tastes good.

### Potatoes and vegetables

Add grated cheese, butter or margarine, milk, cream, sauces, or gravy to mashed potato or vegetables.

### Desserts

Try serving desserts in individual glasses and add sauces or cream or dust with chocolate or icing sugar.

## Sample meal plan

### Breakfast

Fruit juice (with no seeds or bits)

Smooth Weetabix with no lumps soaked in hot or cold milk, with added honey and cream

Pureed fruit and yoghurt.

### Mid-morning

Milky coffee or tea with a chocolate packet made mousse or smooth yoghurt.

### Lunch

Pureed tinned mackerel with tomato sauce

Pork pureed with apple sauce

Custard or pureed rice pudding.

### Mid-afternoon

Nourishing drink (see examples on page seven).

### Dinner

Smooth single consistency soup

Minced beef or Bolognese sauce with pureed vegetables.

Warm custard or egg custard with the pastry removed.

### Before bed

Fruit smoothie or milkshake (see examples on page 8).

### What if I don't have time to puree?

Tinned, packet, frozen or boil in the bag **ready-to-eat meals** can be reheated according to the instructions and then blended. You may need to add fluid to make sure they are smooth.

If you have a freezer, you may wish to **portion and freeze food:**

- Make up four - six servings of a dish and then divide it into portions
- Cool the food after cooking
- Put each portion into clean, empty yoghurt pots, margarine tubs or other plastic containers
- Label and date the containers
- Freeze immediately.

To eat, defrost portions thoroughly at room temperature or in the microwave, then reheat.

**Never refreeze food once you have defrosted it and never reheat food more than once as this could cause food poisoning.**

## Is there anything else I need to know?

### Tips to help with a small appetite

If you have lost your appetite, had unintended weight loss or been advised by your dietitian to fortify your food, use the information below.

## **Always follow your speech and language therapist's recommendations even when using this information.**

The extras may need to be added before the pureeing process or stirred in to achieve a smooth consistency.

You can add extra calories and protein to your food without increasing the amount.

To vegetables, add grated cheese, butter or margarine, salad dressings, sauces, salad cream, mayonnaise or oil.

To breakfast cereals, add yoghurt, seedless jam, cream or honey.

To sauces, add yoghurt, cheese, margarine or butter, evaporated milk or cream.

To soups, add 1 tablespoon of milk powder or 2 tablespoons of cream.

To mashed potato, add grated cheese, cream, margarine or butter.

To puddings, add seedless jam, honey, syrup, cream, evaporated milk or custard.

### **General tips**

Eat frequent small meals, five or six per day.

Use full fat and sugar foods e.g., full cream milk, thick and creamy yoghurts, high juices, and avoid diet or low fat foods.

Have nourishing drinks in between your meals and use fortified milk.

Try to eat puddings often to add variety and calories.

### **Constipation**

Constipation can be a problem for some people following a pureed diet.

Liquidising does not destroy the fibre content of foods so make sure you include high fibre foods in your meals, e.g., porridge oats, Weetabix, fruit and vegetables. Drink plenty of fluid, aiming for eight to ten cups, or three to four pints of fluid per day.

If needed, speak to your GP about laxatives and use them as prescribed.

## **Recipes**

### **High Energy Porridge**

1 sachet / 30g porridge oats

180ml full cream milk

1 tablespoon sugar or honey

1-2 tablespoons of cream

Put the oats and milk into a microwavable bowl and heat for 2 minutes. Stir in the cream and sugar or honey. Puree all ingredients in a blender adding extra hot milk to ensure a smooth consistency.

### **Fruit smoothie**

Serves 1-2

Blend 75g fruit (fresh, tinned or frozen) with 100ml milk or fruit juice, 125g full fat Greek yoghurt and 1-2 teaspoons of honey.

### **Sweet Potato Puree**

2 sweet potatoes, peeled and cooked

2 tablespoons butter or margarine



3 tablespoons whole milk  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Mash/puree the potatoes, adding butter, milk and season to taste.

### **Snack Soup**

Blend 1/2 - 1 carton of fresh soup until smooth adding any extra liquid as required. Heat and serve.

You can experiment with adding in nutritious extras such as meat, beans or cheese before blending.

### **Nourishing drinks ideas**

#### **Fortified milk**

Mix 2-3 tablespoons of milk powder into 1 pint of full cream milk. Have on its own or use in milk based food and drinks.

#### **Hot chocolate malted drink**

Heat 150mls full fat milk for 1 1/2 - 2 minutes, whisk in 2 tablespoons of milk powder and 3 tablespoons of hot chocolate or malted drink powder. Stir in 2 tablespoons double cream and serve.

#### **Fruit smoothie**

1/2 small banana, broken into chunks

50g frozen strawberries

100ml vanilla yoghurt

50ml milk

Blend together until smooth, adding extra milk if needed

#### **Milkshake**

150-200mls fortified / full cream, milk, 1 scoop of ice cream, 4 teaspoons of Nesquik or 2 teaspoons Crusha syrup and 2 teaspoons of cream.

#### **Creamy soup**

Whisk together 1 sachet powdered soup and 150ml hot milk to achieve a smooth consistency

#### **Ready-made drinks**

Mars, Yazoo, Galaxy, Aero, super market smoothies and milkshakes are all suitable.

## **Useful sources of information**

### **Wiltshire Farm Foods**

Pureed meals delivered to your door

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

Freephone: 0800 773 773 (24 hours, 7 days per week)

### **Nutricia Nutillis**

Tasty food, safer food – delicious recipes for people with swallowing difficulties

[www.mynutillis.co.uk](http://www.mynutillis.co.uk)

## British Dietetics Association

[www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts)

## Age UK Advice

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

Freephone: 0800 169 6565

## Dysphagia Cafe

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

## Essential Puree A-Z guidebook

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

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your speech and language therapy team (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm):

Acute/ General medical speech and language therapy: 020 8725 3007

Adult neurology speech and language therapy: 020 8725 4492

Stroke speech and language therapy: 020 8725 2001

Head and neck speech and language therapy: 020 8725 1163

Community Neuro-therapy speech and language therapy: 020 8812 4060

### Queen Mary's Hospital:

Mary Seacole speech and language therapy: 020 8487 6146

Bryson White rehabilitation speech and language therapy: 020 8487 6170

### Wolfson Neurorehabilitation:

Queen Mary's Hospital 020 8487 6142

St George's Hospital 020 8266 6549

**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)**

---

## 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 wings (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

### **AccessAble**

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



**Reference:** SAL\_PUR\_02 **Published:** April 2022 **Review date:** April 2024