

# Soft diet

Information for patients  
Dietetics Department



## SOFT OPTIONS

If you have problems chewing or swallowing, or are unable to eat ordinary solid food for any other reason, it can be difficult to achieve a balanced diet. However, your body still needs just as much nourishment.

This information will give you ideas to enable you to choose as wide a variety of foods as possible.

**If you have been diagnosed with a swallowing difficulty and/or are under the care of a Speech and Language Therapist please refer to your Dietitian for swallow related specific advice.**

## GOOD FOOD GUIDE

Each day, try to include the following:

- ❖ 3 small meals as well as 2 - 3 snacks or milky drinks.
- ❖ At least one pint of full cream milk.
- ❖ At least 6 - 8 cups of fluid. Taking drinks after meals rather than before or with them may help if you feel full quickly.
- ❖ Meat, chicken, fish, well cooked eggs, cheese, yoghurt, beans or lentils, at two main meals.

- ❖ One serving of bread, potatoes, rice, pasta or cereal with each meal.
- ❖ Small portions of fruit and vegetables. Drink fruit juice if little fruit is eaten.

Your Speech and Language Therapist will advise you about suitable textures (e.g. level 6 soft & bite-sized, level 5 minced & moist diet or level 4 pureed diet), but you should be aware that the following could cause swallowing difficulties:

- ❖ Mixed textures (solids & liquids together) e.g. minestrone soup.
- ❖ Stringy textures e.g. bacon, cabbage, runner beans, celery.
- ❖ Foods which do not break down e.g. lettuce, cucumber, peas, beans, sweetcorn, nuts, vegetable and fruit skins.
- ❖ Crunchy foods e.g. toast, crisps, dry biscuits.
- ❖ Crumbly items e.g. bread crusts, pie crusts, crumble.

## EXAMPLES OF SOFT OPTIONS

The following pages give ideas for soft foods.

### Meat, Poultry

- ❖ Minced meat and dishes made with mince e.g. cottage pie, bolognaise, meatballs.
- ❖ Tender pieces of meat in stews and casseroles.
- ❖ Tender roast meat, cut into small pieces with gravy.
- ❖ Tinned meats, e.g. corned beef, chopped ham and pork, chicken in white wine sauce.
- ❖ Tinned sausages and beans.
- ❖ Pork, lamb or turkey mince is available at most supermarkets and is softer and smaller in size than beef mince.

For a level 5 diet meat pieces should not exceed 2mm.

### Fish

- ❖ Flaked, steamed or poached fish (beware of bones).
- ❖ Frozen fish in sauces - "Boil in the Bag"
- ❖ Tinned fish - mash salmon, tuna or other tinned fish and soften with salad cream, mayonnaise.

### Eggs

- ❖ Scrambled, poached & boiled egg.
- ❖ Egg dishes e.g. egg custard, omelette, pancakes (sweet and savoury).

Make sure egg is well cooked

### Cheese

- ❖ Grated cheese/cottage cheese - try adding to soups, sauces, mashed potato, baked beans, spaghetti in tomato sauce.
- ❖ Cheese spread.
- ❖ Cream cheese and other soft cheeses.
- ❖ Cheese dishes e.g. macaroni cheese, cauliflower cheese.

### Potatoes

- ❖ Mashed potato with plenty of butter and milk.
- ❖ Instant or frozen mashed potato.
- ❖ Jacket potatoes - discard skin and add soft filling e.g. grated/cottage cheese, tuna and mayonnaise, baked beans.

## Bread and Cereals

- ❖ Porridge and instant cereals e.g. Ready Brek.
- ❖ Other breakfast cereals soaked in plenty of cold or hot milk e.g. Weetabix, Cheerios.
- ❖ Avoid cereals with added nuts and dried fruit.
- ❖ Bread (except with added grains and seeds) - remove crusts if necessary.
- ❖ Soft rolls.
- ❖ Some suitable sandwich fillings:
  - ◆ Meat and fish paste
  - ◆ Egg mayonnaise
  - ◆ Corned beef
  - ◆ Smooth peanut butter
  - ◆ Cheese spread
  - ◆ Marmite
  - ◆ Sandwich spread
- ❖ Pasta - dishes such as macaroni cheese, spaghetti in tomato sauce, pasta shells in cream sauce, ravioli, lasagne.
- ❖ Rice - well cooked, boiled/ fried with soft meat or fish. May require sauce if rice is too dry.

## Vegetables

- ❖ Cook vegetables well.
- ❖ Cut into small pieces and mash if necessary.
- ❖ Suitable ones may include: Mashed turnip, parsnips, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower. Lentils, baked beans, mushy peas.

## Vegetarian dishes

- ❖ Tofu or Quorn
- ❖ Lentil dishes
- ❖ Egg or cheese dishes
- ❖ Smooth Peanut butter or Humous
- ❖ Pasta dishes
- ❖ Rice based dishes

## Fruit

- ❖ Choose soft, ripened varieties of fresh fruit e.g. peaches, pears, nectarines, plums, melon and bananas.
- ❖ Remove skin, pith and pips.
- ❖ Cut into small pieces.
- ❖ Stewed e.g. apple, rhubarb.
- ❖ Tinned fruit (except pineapple) is usually soft.
- ❖ Purée and add to yoghurt, ice-cream, cream.
- ❖ If you cannot manage fresh fruit, have a glass of pure fruit juice or Ribena every day to give you Vitamin C.

## Puddings

- ❖ Milk puddings e.g. custard, rice pudding, sago, tapioca, semolina, (tinned or home-made)
- ❖ Blancmange.
- ❖ Jelly or milk jelly.
- ❖ Trifle.
- ❖ Fromage Frais.
- ❖ Sorbet.
- ❖ Ice-cream.
- ❖ Mousses.
- ❖ Yoghurt.
- ❖ Angel Delight.

## **IF YOU NEED YOUR FOOD EVEN SOFTER, TRY THE FOLLOWING:**

- ❖ Purée food using a liquidiser, food processor or hand blender.
- ❖ Most family meals can be puréed successfully provided that extra fluid is added.
- ❖ Stews, casseroles and most meats puréed with extra gravy, or fish in a sauce are ideal main courses to purée.
- ❖ Vegetables and potato can be puréed with some milk or cooking water.
- ❖ Puréeing each food separately makes meals more appetising and retains their individual colour.

## **EXTRA TIPS**

- ❖ Always sit upright when eating or drinking.
- ❖ Take your time when eating, do not rush meals.
- ❖ Take small mouthfuls and chew as well as you can.
- ❖ Visit your dentist regularly. Healthy teeth and well fitting dentures will help with eating.
- ❖ Eat little and often - six small meals a day may be easier to manage than three large ones.
- ❖ Add plenty of gravy or sauce to meals to make them easier to swallow.
- ❖ Use herbs, spices and stock cubes to make sure that your meals have plenty of flavour.

- ❖ Contact your GP if your ability to swallow becomes worse.
- ❖ A speech therapist will be able to advise you on swallowing techniques. Ask your GP or hospital doctor to refer you.

## **WEIGHT GAIN**

If you have lost weight recently then it is important to maximise your food intake. This can be done by using everyday foods.

### **Fortified milk**

Add four tablespoons of dried skimmed milk powder to a pint of full fat milk. Keep in the fridge and use as fresh milk in drinks and cooking. Use milk or evaporated milk in place of water in soups, jellies, puddings and bed-time drinks.

### **Breakfast cereals**

- ❖ Use fortified milk.
- ❖ Sprinkle an extra spoonful of sugar on top.
- ❖ Add double cream, evaporated milk, syrup or honey to porridge.

### **Soups**

Add one or more of the following to soups:

- ❖ Double cream
- ❖ Extra meat or pulses e.g. lentils
- ❖ Dried skimmed milk powder
- ❖ Fortified milk
- ❖ Grated cheese
- ❖ Soft cooked rice/pasta

### **Mashed potato**

Add one or more of the following to mashed potato:

- ❖ Butter or margarine
- ❖ Double cream
- ❖ Fortified milk
- ❖ Grated cheese

### **Vegetables**

Melt butter or margarine over vegetables or top with a milk based sauce or sprinkle with grated cheese.

## Puddings

Add one or more of the following to puddings:

- ❖ Double cream
- ❖ Honey
- ❖ Ice-cream
- ❖ Sugar
- ❖ Evaporated milk
- ❖ Syrup
- ❖ Jam

## Cakes and biscuits

Choose plain cakes without fruit and nuts e.g. sponge cake, Madeira cake, Swiss roll. Soften cakes with custard or cream. Soften biscuits by dipping in a hot drink.

## NOURISHING DRINKS

- ❖ Whenever you do not feel like eating, have a nourishing drink.
- ❖ You can also drink these to help you put on some weight.
- ❖ High Protein nutritional supplement drinks can be bought from most pharmacy's e.g. Meritene or Complan and are available in a variety of flavours.
- ❖ The sweet flavours are nice with ice-cream and/or pureed fruit mixed into them.
- ❖ Try adding your own ingredients such as milkskake syrup, pureed fruit, mashed banana, ice-cream, drinking chocolate to natural/vanilla flavoured drinks.
- ❖ Remember malted drinks, drinking chocolate and cocoa are nourishing especially if you make them all with fortified milk. Though traditionally bedtime drinks, try taking them between meals occasionally.

## SAMPLE MEAL PLAN

### SOFT, HIGH PROTEIN, HIGH ENERGY DIET

#### Breakfast:

- ❖ **Porridge**  
Make with fortified milk.  
Add sugar or honey, puree if necessary.
- ❖ **Tea**  
Add sugar if desired.  
Use fortified milk.

#### Mid morning:

- ❖ **Milky coffee**  
Use fortified milk.
- ❖ **Banana**  
Mashed with milk and sugar.

#### Lunch:

- ❖ **Chicken soup**  
Sieve if necessary.  
Add double cream or milk powder.
- ❖ **Fish in sauce**  
Flake/puree if necessary with extra sauce.
- ❖ **Carrots**  
Mash/puree. Add butter or margarine.

#### ❖ **Potatoes**

Cream with a little milk/  
butter or margarine.

#### ❖ **Yoghurt**

Use a full fat yoghurt.

#### Mid-afternoon:

Nourishing drink

#### Evening meal:

- ❖ **Beef casserole**  
Puree with extra gravy if necessary.
- ❖ **Turnip**  
Mash/puree. Add butter or margarine.
- ❖ **Potatoes**  
Cream with a little milk/  
butter or margarine.
- ❖ **Rice Pudding**  
Make with fortified milk.  
Add sugar/jam.

#### Before bed:

- ❖ **Hot chocolate**  
Made fully with  
fortified milk.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES:



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

Community Nutrition Support Dietitians  
14 Beckford Street, Hamilton ML3 0TA  
Telephone: 01698 754800

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