

Eating well on an easy to chew diet

Nutrition & Dietetics Services

Introduction

Why do I need an easy to chew diet?

You may have been advised to eat soft foods because of a sore mouth following treatment or chewing or swallowing problems, for example after surgery to the mouth or throat.

How long do I need to follow this diet?

You may be able to decide for yourself when to move on to more solid food. However, if you are under the care of a Speech and Language Therapist for your eating, you should be guided by them.

An easy to chew diet sounds quite easy, is there anything I need to know?

Many foods and meals are obviously easy to eat. However, some of these foods and meals are not very nutritious. Some of these foods and meals may be more difficult to eat than you may expect.

This leaflet aims to give you some ideas an easy to chew diet that encourages you to eat a varied and nutritious diet for as long as you need to avoid more solid foods.

Would pureed food be better for me?

Pureed meals (smooth texture) are less appetising and nutritious than more lumpy foods, so should only be used if you can not manage lumps. You may need to take supplement drinks or see a dietitian if you need a pureed diet for several weeks.

Many of the foods and meals listed on pages three and four of this leaflet can be pureed using a hand blender. Avoid adding water to get the right texture, instead use gravy or sauce, butter, cream, milk, meat juices or vegetables cooking water.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Main meal suggestions:

- Chicken, turkey or lamb casserole
- Sausage or liver casserole
- Poached fish in sauce
- Homemade lentil soup or dahl
- Scrambled eggs

Serve with potato creamed with butter and milk and pureed vegetables - carrots, swede, turnip or cauliflower.

Puddings are easier, for example:

- Custard - maybe with pureed banana or stewed apple
- Semolina
- Blancmange
- Egg custard

How is an easy to chew diet different from a pureed diet?

As a general rule, foods which you can mash with a fork will be easy to chew, for example:

Main meals

- Minced meat: - including cottage pie, lasagne, chilli, spaghetti bolognese, moussaka etc. However, some people find that the lumps in beef mince are still too hard.
- Meatballs or faggots in gravy
- Slow, moist cooked meat and poultry: casseroles, liver is less chewy and more crumbly than meat and poultry
- Poached fish in sauce, flaked or mashed
- Fisherman's pie
- Cheese and potato pie
- Cauliflower cheese
- Dahl or lentil casserole or soup
- Jacket potato with butter and cheese or baked beans or tuna mayonnaise
- Corned beef hash
- Tinned hot dog sausages
- Tinned fish and/or tinned fish roe

Other meats can be made easier to chew

- Finely chopped roast meat and gravy
- Braised beef or shin, cut into small pieces, with plenty of gravy
- Sausage, without the skin
- Egg, beans or cheese on toast - use lots of butter on hot toast and cut the crusts off. Top with scrambled or mashed poached egg, cheese (and grill until melted) or baked beans (the toast should be quite soggy)

You need to eat a balanced and varied diet, so with each main meal include a starchy food, for example:

- Mashed potato with milk and butter
- Chopped spaghetti
- Macaroni cheese
- Boiled rice
- Chappati softened with curry or dahl

Try to eat fruit and vegetables every day

Fruit

Mashed banana, tinned or stewed fruit. Soft peeled fruit, like plums, peaches or pears.

Vegetables

Mashed, well cooked vegetables such as carrots, broccoli, sprouts, cabbage, swede, cauliflower and stringless green beans.

Puddings

Puddings are a good way to get in extra nutrition and are often easy to chew, e.g. rice pudding, sponge and custard. Other puddings can be mashed with extra custard, cream or ice cream to soften crumble or pastry.

Quick puddings including thick and creamy or whole milk yoghurts or fromage frais, individual trifles, instant whips or chocolate desserts.

Snacks

Snacks between meals are another way of ensuring that you are getting enough nutrition. You may be able to take biscuits dunked in a hot drink, dips, pate, ice cream, a small trifle, cake and cream. However, you may find it easier to have nutritious drinks between your meals.

What are nutritious drinks?

These include milk and milky drinks, supplement drinks and maybe pure fruit juices or fruit smoothies (especially if you are not taking any fruit or vegetables).

Milk

Aim to have one pint of full fat milk each day. This can be taken in drinks, on cereals or in porridge or in puddings. Full fat milk has a plain silver top if a glass bottle or blue top if a plastic bottle.

If you are underweight, losing weight, or not eating your usual meals you can fortify your milk by mixing in two ounces or four tablespoons of any skimmed milk powder to a pint of milk, and then using as ordinary milk throughout the day.

Supplement drinks

These can be useful for people who are losing weight or who cannot eat enough food. There are two main types:

- Those you can buy in chemists or supermarkets - these include Complan and Meritene and are available in sweet and savoury flavours.
- Those only available on prescription from your doctor. These include:
 - Milkshake style ones such as Fortisip, Ensure Plus, Aymes shake, Nualtra and Fresubin.
 - Juice based ones such as Fortijuice, Ensure Plus Juice and Fresubin Juicy
 - Dessert style, such as Forticreme, Ensure Plus Creme, and Fresubin 2kcal Creme

Do I need supplements if I am eating an easy to chew diet?

Most people who are eating well and who are not underweight do not need supplements. Even then you can get more nutrition into your food by including nutritious drinks and snacks and fortified food into your diet. If your diet is very restricted and you are not managing fruit and vegetables you may need a multi-vitamin supplement.

What are nutritious drinks?

These are usually milky drinks preferably made with full fat or fortified milk (see below for advice on how to make this). Examples include milkshakes (even better with cream or ice cream), drinking chocolate or malted milk drinks or just plain milk. If you like coffee, try it made with all milk or half milk half water.

Pure fruit juices or fruit smoothies are a useful way of including extra vitamins and some calories.

What are nutritious snacks?

These are those snacks which provide useful calories and other nutrients, like protein and vitamins. Here are some examples:

- Mousses, Mars bar or Milky bar type desserts
- Cocktail sausage roll
- Biscuits dunked in a hot drink
- Individual trifles
- Small piece of cake with cream to moisten and soften
- Full fat yoghurts - if they are too big try the small yoghurts and fromage frais aimed at children

What is fortified food?

Fortified food is ordinary food to which extra calories and / or protein in the form of other foods are added. Here are some examples:

Usual food	Fortified alternative
Milk	Add skimmed milk powder to full fat (blue top plastic bottle or silver top glass bottle) milk. Warm a little milk taken from 1 pint and blend 2 oz or 4 tablespoons skimmed milk powder with this to a paste. Gradually blend in the remainder of the pint of milk. Use this milk throughout the day in drinks, cereals, sauces and puddings.
Mashed potato	Add butter and fortified milk. If using to top a fish or cottage pie add grated cheese before cooking (but careful not to overcook and make the top too hard and crunchy).
Vegetables	Add a knob of butter to warm, well cooked mashed vegetables and grated cheese if liked.
Porridge or instant hot cereal	Make with all milk, preferably fortified and add a little double cream. Add sugar, syrup or honey to taste.
Custard	Make with fortified milk and add a tablespoon of double cream.

Fruit	Add Cornish style ice cream, cream, evaporated milk or custard made with fortified milk (and a little double cream) to mashed tinned fruit, mashed banana or sweetened stewed fruit.
Soup	Add finely chopped cooked meat, grated cheese and / or a tablespoon of double cream.

Are there any foods I should avoid?

The ideas given in this leaflet are only suggestions. If you try a food and can't manage to swallow or chew it, then you would be best to avoid that food, at least for a while.

Avoid any foods that are obviously chewy or hard, like gristly meat, dry cooked meat (it tends to be hard), stringy or hard vegetables. Some people find bread difficult, because it "clogs".

Packet or canned soup can be a useful standby or occasional snack food. However, avoid soup as a usual part of your diet, unless it is homemade, as it does not have enough calories and protein. Avoid baby foods, they do not have enough protein for adults, and tend to be tasteless to adults (which will not help appetite).

Other foods that are easy to eat but which do not contain enough nutrition include jelly and ice cream. Keep it for a between meal snack, or have ice cream with fruit crumble or fruit pie.

Contacts

If you have tried these suggestions and continue to have problems eating, please discuss this with your Dietitian.

Your Dietitian is:

Nutrition and Dietetic Services

Building 12

New Cross Hospital

Wolverhampton

WV10 0QP

Tel: 01902 695335

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。