

# Diet ideas for patients who need a softer or mashed diet

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

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Information for Patients

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**This leaflet is not for patients under International Dysphagia Diet Standard Initiative (IDDSI) staging.**

**It does not replace IDDSI recommendations for patients identified by Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) as having swallowing difficulties (oropharyngeal dysphagia).**

Please speak with SLT for more information or for more specific advice.

## Why have I been given this leaflet?

This leaflet is for adults who find it hard to eat and drink because of their illness or treatment.

**It is not for patients under the care of a SLT who have been given specific IDDSI diet advice.**

This may include:

- people with tumours in the mouth or throat,
- people having treatments that result in a sore mouth,
- people with poorly fitting dentures or loose teeth,
- patients with gastric problems that need a diet that is easy to manage.

You may find your usual food choices too hard and difficult to manage. Eating may cause pain or discomfort. It may take you longer to eat. You may have a reduced ability to chew or more food staying in your mouth. This can make you eat less than you need too, causing nutritional deficiencies and weight loss.

This leaflet will help you choose suitable foods, adapt your meals and snacks and give you advice on how to get the most nourishment from your meals.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.uhleicester.nhs.uk](http://www.uhleicester.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net](mailto:uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net)

## This leaflet will:

- help you get a varied diet when you have swallowing problems caused by your illness or treatment.
- help to make sure you are meeting your nutritional needs whilst on a modified diet.
- give you confidence and ideas to progress and improve your diet if advised by the dietitian or SLT.

## Your recommended diet

The SLT or doctor have recommended you follow a diet of the following consistency:

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## Softer, mashed diets

- Your ability to eat different foods may change during treatment and recovery.
- After treatments such as surgery, radiotherapy or chemotherapy, you may need a softer diet for a while.
- A softer diet can be different in texture depending on your needs at the time.

The table on the next pages will help you choose foods that are easier to eat on a soft or mashed diet. You can add liquid to make food softer, and mash it as much as you need.

If you are finding these foods too difficult to eat, you may need a smoother diet. All foods in the 'suitable' column in the table can be blended and sieved, except those in **bold** (see page 5 to 6 for more information).

Foods	Suitable	Best avoided
<b>Cereals</b>	<p>Ready brek or porridge.</p> <p>Any cereal softened with milk.</p>	<p>Cereals which cannot be soaked like crunchy granolas.</p> <p>Cereals containing pieces of nuts, seeds or dried fruit.</p>
<b>Breads</b>	<p>Remove crusts and soften for example broken into soup, soaked with tinned tomatoes or spaghetti hoops then mashed well.</p> <p>Sandwiches can sometimes be managed if a moist filling is used.</p> <p><b>Chapattis. These can be chopped into small pieces and mashed with a sauce or dipped in tea if needed.</b></p> <p><b>Toast well-soaked with butter or a sauce.</b></p>	<p>Crusty breads or rolls.</p> <p>Breads with seeds, nuts or dried fruit.</p>
<b>Pasta / rice</b>	<p>Well cooked pasta either in small shapes or mashed and mixed with a sauce.</p> <p>Well cooked rice mixed with a sauce.</p> <p>Tinned spaghetti.</p> <p>Tinned ravioli.</p>	<p>Pasta without a sauce.</p> <p>Al dente pasta or rice.</p> <p>Rice without a sauce.</p>
<b>Potatoes</b>	<p>Mashed or baked potatoes with plenty of butter and milk / cream / cheese.</p> <p>Soft thick cut chips softly cooked with a sauce like gravy.</p> <p>Waffles or hash browns (not crispy) with a sauce.</p>	<p>Potato skins.</p> <p>Dry or crispy potatoes or chips.</p>

Foods	Suitable	Best avoided
<b>Meat and meat alternatives</b>	<p>Soft, well cooked meat that is cut into small pieces with a sauce, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tinned sausages in spaghetti</li> <li>• Corned beef</li> <li>• Hot dog sausages</li> <li>• Slow cooked chicken or beef</li> <li>• Tinned ham</li> <li>• Tinned chicken or beef</li> <li>• Quorn mince</li> <li>• Smooth pate</li> <li>• Potted meats</li> <li>• Faggots</li> <li>• Haggis</li> <li>• Skinless sausages</li> <li>• Mince (may need to be blended if contains hard lumps)</li> </ul>	<p>Dry, tough meat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chicken breast</li> <li>• Steak</li> <li>• Pork chop</li> <li>• Sausages with skins</li> <li>• Bacon</li> </ul>
<b>Fish</b>	<p>Most fish can be easily mashed with a sauce.</p> <p>Fresh fish like white fish or salmon.</p> <p>Tinned fish (without bones).</p> <p>Tinned crab.</p> <p>Fish pate.</p>	<p>Fish with bones or crispy skin.</p> <p>Shellfish.</p>
<b>Beans and pulses</b>	<p>Well cooked lentils, such as dhal.</p> <p>Hummus.</p> <p>Soft baked beans.</p>	<p>Beans with dry skins.</p> <p>Dry crispy lentil snacks.</p>
<b>Eggs</b>	<p>Moist scrambled eggs.</p> <p>Egg mayonnaise.</p> <p>Poached or soft boiled eggs.</p> <p>Lightly fried eggs.</p>	<p>Dry boiled eggs without mayonnaise.</p>
<b>Nuts and seeds</b>	<p>Only if ground up, for example in cakes.</p>	<p>All hard nuts and seeds.</p>

Foods	Suitable	Best avoided
<b>Vegetables and salad</b>	<p>Boiled root vegetables. Skins removed as required and cut into small pieces or mashed like carrots, swede, parsnips, butternut squash.</p> <p>Cooked spinach.</p> <p>Well cooked broccoli / cauliflower florets.</p> <p>Mushy peas.</p> <p>Cooked mushrooms.</p> <p>Roasted courgettes / aubergine.</p>	<p>Raw vegetables</p> <p>Lettuce</p> <p>Crunchy or roasted vegetables</p> <p>Peas</p> <p>Sweetcorn</p>
<b>Fruits</b>	<p>Tinned fruit.</p> <p>Stewed fruit.</p> <p>Banana, strawberries/raspberries.</p> <p>Cooked tomatoes (skinless if needed).</p> <p>Roasted, jarred peppers.</p> <p>Avocados or guacamole.</p>	<p>Raw, hard fruits like apples and pears.</p> <p>Fruits with skins like cherries.</p>
<b>Dairy products</b>	<p>Milk</p> <p>Evaporated / condensed milk</p> <p>Yogurts</p> <p>Soft cheese</p> <p>Cottage cheese</p> <p>Grated cheese mixed into other foods</p> <p>Crème fraiche</p> <p>Ice-cream</p> <p>Cream</p> <p>Fromage frais</p> <p>Rice pudding / tapioca / semolina</p> <p>Custard</p> <p>Trifle and mousses</p>	<p>Yogurts with nuts, seeds, granola or dried fruit.</p> <p>Dry, crumbly cheese.</p> <p>Cheese with fruit or nuts.</p>
<b>Biscuits and cakes</b>	<p>Soft cakes (mashed with custard, ice-cream or cream if needed).</p> <p>Biscuits dunked in hot drinks.</p>	<p>Fruit cake</p> <p>Malt loaf</p> <p>Hard, dry biscuits</p> <p>Dry crackers</p>
<b>Other snacks</b>	<p>Crisps that 'melt in the mouth' like Quavers, Wotsits, Skips.</p> <p><b>Crackers like Ritz with cream cheese / smooth dips.</b></p> <p>Jelly</p> <p>Chocolate</p> <p>Jelly babies</p>	<p>Crunchy crisps</p> <p>Twiglets</p> <p>Nuts</p> <p>Dried fruit</p> <p>Hard or chewy sweets / mints</p> <p>Bombay mix</p>

## What is a pureed diet?

If a softer or mashed diet is too difficult to eat, a pureed diet is likely to be easier.

Pureed food is smooth and has no lumps. Most food can be pureed by blending it with gravy, sauces, milk or water to a consistency you find easiest. By adding more or less liquid you can change the thickness of the puree.

Some foods are naturally a pureed consistency, for example; smooth yoghurts (without bits) or custard.

Most foods can be made into a pureed consistency using 1 of the following pieces of kitchen equipment:

- a liquidiser
- a food processor
- a hand-held blender
- a sieve

## How to puree your own food:

1. Remove skins, seeds, pith, bones or other parts you cannot eat.
2. Cook your food as normal. Then cut the food into small pieces and put it in the liquidiser or blender.
3. Add fluids such as milk, cream, juice, stock or gravy and blend to make a smooth consistency.
4. If you are using a sieve, push the pureed mixture through the sieve using the back of a spoon. This will remove any remaining pips, lumps or skins.
5. You may need to reheat the meal when you have finished preparing as it can cool down while blending.
6. You can puree foods together or separately. Meals can look more appealing if foods are blended separately.
7. It can be easier to batch cook pureed meals then freeze them for later.

If you need more information on a pureed diet, please contact your dietitian or SLT.

## Practical tips

- Eat in a quiet relaxed space and take your time.
- Make sure you swallow each mouthful before you take the next one. If you feel that some food is still at the back of your throat, swallow again before continuing to eat.
- Make your meals look appealing by using foods that are different colours. Foods that are light in colour such as chicken or fish are better served with brightly coloured vegetables like carrots or broccoli.

- If you have a freezer, you may find it helpful make up a full recipe (4 to 6 servings) and then divide into portions to be frozen. You can do this by:
  1. Cooling the food after cooking.
  2. Portion into clean, plastic containers.
  3. Label and date the container pots.
  4. Freeze as soon as cooled.

To eat, defrost portions thoroughly at room temperature or in the microwave, then reheat. Remember not to re-freeze defrosted food or reheat food more than once due to the risk of food poisoning.
- If you are feeling tired preparing meals can be an effort. Using convenience foods or ready meals can make life a bit easier for you. These can still be nourishing. Choose softer ready meals, such as fish pie, pasta meals or cottage pie and blend as needed.
- Some companies also deliver pre-prepared pureed meals to your home, like Wiltshire Farm Foods, Simply Puree and Oakhouse Foods. Contact details for these can be found on the next page.

## **Maintaining or increasing your weight on a modified diet**

Maintaining or increasing your weight can be difficult if you need a modified diet. If this is the case, it is best to try and enrich your foods as much as possible. Listed below are some ideas for adding extra calories and protein into your meals:

- Try and eat at least 3 meals per day and 3 small snacks between your meals.
- Using ready meals or tinned foods is fine. These are easier options if you find preparing or cooking food difficult.
- Use full fat dairy products like blue top milk, thick and creamy yogurts.
- Enrich your milk by adding 2 tablespoons of skimmed milk powder to a pint of milk and shake well. This can be kept in the fridge and used as normal.
- Fortify your foods by adding grated cheese, butter or cream to vegetables and soups before you mash them.
- Have full fat ice-cream, custard or cream with cakes or stewed fruit.
- Have easy to eat snacks readily available, like pots of yogurt or custard, trifles or biscuits softened in a hot drink.
- Have a hot milky drink at least once a day like milky coffee, hot chocolate or Ovaltine.
- Cook with plenty of oil, butter or ghee.
- Nutritional supplement drinks and soups such as Complan, Build Up and Nourishment drinks are available to buy at most pharmacies and larger supermarkets.

- Weigh yourself a maximum of once a week. If you are concerned you are losing weight, contact your dietitian. They will assess your intake. They may start you on nutritional supplements on prescription from your GP if needed.
- If you are diabetic, your dietitian will be able to tailor this advice to fit your needs.
- If you need more information, please ask your dietitian, specialist nurse or at the Macmillan Information Centre as more detailed booklets are available.

## Meal companies providing modified meals

The following companies provide deliveries of meals to your door and offer a selection of meals of different textures:

Wiltshire Farm Foods: [www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com](http://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com) 0800 077 3100

Oakhouse Foods: [www.oakhousefoods.co.uk](http://www.oakhousefoods.co.uk) 0333 370 6700

## Suggested meal ideas

**All of these options can be mashed or pureed if needed.**

### Breakfast:

- Weetabix or porridge made with full fat milk and sweetened with sugar.
- Scrambled egg and tinned tomatoes.
- Stewed fruit or mashed banana with full fat yogurt.
- Milky coffee or tea with bread dipped into it.

### Mid-morning:

- 2 biscuits dunked in tea or milky coffee.
- Complan milkshake made with full cream milk.
- Small pot of full fat yogurt or custard.

### Lunch:

- Soup with buttered bread (soaked in the soup if needed).
- Jacket potato with plenty of butter and cheese / baked beans / spaghetti hoops (remove the skin).
- Spaghetti hoops or ravioli on buttered, lightly toasted bread (crust removed and soak bread with the sauce).
- Dhal or vegetable curry with chapattis broken up and soaked in the sauce.

**Mid-afternoon:**

- Small trifle or rice pudding.
- Cake or sponge pudding soften with custard.
- Ritz crackers with cream cheese (not suitable to puree).

**Main meal:**

- Fish mashed with a white sauce, mashed potatoes and mushy peas.
- Slow cooked or tinned beef stew (meat cut and mashed with the gravy) with jacket potato and mashed swede and carrots.
- Chicken or vegetable curry (mashed or cut into small pieces) with chapattis soaked in the sauce.
- Well cooked pasta with a cheese or tomato sauce (mashed or cut up).
- Fish pie with soft broccoli.

**Evening:**

- Full fat ice-cream.
- Sponge pudding and custard.
- Rice pudding / Crème caramel / trifle.
- Soft fruit and custard or cream.

**Contact details**

Dietitian: .....

**0116 258 5400 / 07870 814469** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm, excluding bank holidays)

Speech and Language Therapy: .....

