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Meal ideas and advice when you need to follow a level 7 easy to chew diet

Nutrition and Dietetics

Adult Speech and Language Therapy

Information for Patients

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Main points

1. Food should be:
   - soft in texture,
   - easy to chew,
   - can be cut or broken apart with side of fork or spoon.
2. Bread may not be suitable. Check with your speech and language therapist for advice.
3. You should try to have lots of different foods in your diet.
4. Some foods should be avoided (see page 3).

Introduction

An easy to chew diet is helpful for people who find it difficult to chew hard foods. You may have a sore mouth or have been ill and find chewing hard.

A speech and language therapist may talked to you about this diet and why it would help you.

It is important that you follow this advice.

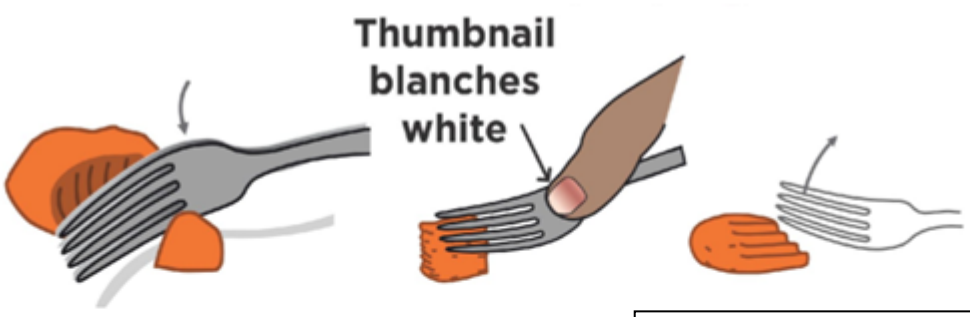
This leaflet aims to give you ideas for foods you can eat.

It also has useful tips on how to make meal times as enjoyable as possible.

If you have recently lost weight or are underweight, you will find some useful ideas on how to make food as nourishing as possible.

What is an easy to chew diet?

- It is normal, everyday foods of a soft / tender texture. They are easy to chew. They can be cut or broken apart with the side of a fork or spoon.
- You can eat foods using fork, spoon or fingers.
- You may be able to eat foods which are ‘mixed thin and thick’ texture foods and drinks together. Ask your speech and language therapist for advice on this.
- You can eat a range of different food sizes in this diet.
- You should be able to ‘bite off’ pieces of tender food. Choose bite sizes that are safe to chew and swallow. You should also be able to chew these until they are safe to swallow without tiring easily.
- You should be able to move food for chewing around your mouth using your tongue until it is soft and moist enough to be swallowed.
- You should also be able to remove hard pieces of food that cannot be swallowed such as bone or gristle from your mouth without help or prompting from others.
- Fork pressure test: to make sure food is soft enough, press down on the fork until your thumbnail turns to white (blanches), then lift the fork to see that the food is completely squashed and does not regain its shape.



Must be able to break food apart easily with the side of a fork or spoon.

Easy to Chew foods must break apart easily and pass Form Pressure Test!

IDDSI For Pressure Test

To make sure the food is soft enough press down on the fork until the thumbnail blanches to white, then lift the fort to see that the food is completely squashed and does not regain its shape.

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative 2016 https://iddsi.org/framework/

Examples of easy to chew foods for adults

- Meat: cooked until tender. If it cannot be served soft and tender, serve as minced meat.
- Fish: cooked until soft enough to break apart easily with a fork or spoon.
- Fruit: soft enough to break apart into smaller pieces with side of fork or spoon. Any excess fluid should be drained. Do not use the stringy parts for example, the white pith of an orange. Take care when eating fruit with a high water content, where the juice can separate from the fruit in your mouth during chewing such as melon.
- Vegetables: boiled / steamed until tender. Stir fried vegetables maybe too firm for this diet.
- Cereal: the texture should be soft. Excess liquid should be drained before eating.
- Rice: no special cooking requirements.
- Bread/ sandwiches (and sandwich fillings that are right for this diet). Check with your speech and language therapist for advice on this.

May include mixed 'thin and thick texture' food and liquids together. Speak with your speech and language therapist for advice on this.

Food textures to avoid on an easy to chew diet

Food types to avoid	Examples of food to avoid
Hard or dry food	Nuts, raw vegetables (such as carrots, cauliflower, broccoli), dry cakes, bread, dry cereal, pie crusts
Tough or fibrous food	Steak, pineapple
Chewy food	Lollies, sweets, toffees, cheese chunks, marshmallows, chewing gum, sticky mashed potato, dried fruits, sticky foods
Crispy food	Crackling, crisp bacon, cornflakes
Crunchy food	Raw carrot, raw apple, popcorn
Sharp or spiky	Corn chips, crisps
Pips, seeds	Apple seeds, pumpkin seeds, white of orange
Bone or gristle	Chicken or fish bones, meat with gristle
Sticky or gummy food	Edible gelatin, sticky rice cakes
Stringy food	Green beans, rhubarb, celery, lettuce

Ice-cream and jelly may also not be recommended if you are also having thickened fluids. Check with your speech and language therapist.

Practical tips

It is important to enjoy your food and mealtimes. The following points may help:

- Adding sauces to drier foods may make them easier to chew and swallow such as thick gravy, parsley sauce, custard, double cream, or dunking biscuits in a hot drink.
- Include a variety of foods to avoid boredom (see food choice ideas on pages 5 to 7).
- Foods should be served at the correct temperature to bring out the flavour.
- Try to eat slowly and serve a small amount at a time so your food does not get cold before you finish it. You could heat up another small portion later if you feel you can manage more. Warming your plate before serving may help to keep your food hot for longer.
- Eat in a quiet and relaxed atmosphere where there is no hurry to finish and sit upright during your meal.
- Finish 1 mouthful before taking the next. If you feel any food is at the back of your throat, swallow again before continuing with your meal.
- If you are finding it difficult to swallow food or fluids ask your GP to refer you to a speech and language therapist, unless you are already known to a specialist team.
- If you cannot manage to eat 3 meals a day, try eating ‘little and often’ and take advantage of times when your appetite is good.
- Have nourishing snacks or drinks handy for when you feel hungry such as mousses, milkshake, yogurts and custard. See page 6 for more ideas.
- Drinks such as water, tea and coffee give very little nourishment and can fill you up. Try milky drinks instead. Try not to drink just before a meal, as you may not be able to eat as much.
- A small amount of alcohol helps to stimulate your appetite (check with your doctor first) such as a small glass of sherry or brandy.
- If you have a sore mouth, it may be useful to avoid spicy and acidic foods or drinks such as ’hot’ curries, chili, acidic fruit and juices such as tomatoes, pineapple and orange.
- Weigh yourself once a week. If you find that you are losing weight, see page 8 for some tips and contact your dietitian who will be able to advise you further.

Balanced diet

You should try to have foods from each different food group everyday:

Protein foods: try to have 1 of these 2 times a day:

- Minced/ soft meat or fish in sauce
- Well-cooked lentils, beans, pulses
- Scrambled egg
- Cheese in sauce
- ‘Ready Brek’, porridge or ‘Weetabix’ with warm milk
- Mashed potato or pasta/rice with a sauce
- Rice pudding, semolina or custard

Vegetables: that will cook until soft such as:

- Carrots
- Turnips
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli
- Parsnip
- Swede

Fruit: try to have 2 portions a day of stewed/ tinned/ soft fruit such as:

- Mango
- Banana
- Stewed / baked apple (without the skin)
- Tinned peaches or pears
- Fruit which can be pureed and sieved if needed or put in a drink such as banana or strawberry milkshake. Please check with speech and language therapist if on thickened drinks.

Dairy products: try to have the equivalent of at least 1 pint of milk per day:

- 1 smooth yogurt (no bits) = ⅓ of a pint
- 30g/1oz cheese = ⅓ of a pint

Use full cream varieties and wherever possible make custard, semolina or rice pudding with full cream milk.

Fatty and sugary foods: add more of these foods if you need to gain weight such as butter, margarine, oil, cream or grated cheese, sugar, honey or syrup.

Easy to chew meal ideas

****Please remember if you are under a speech and language therapist, refer to their advice about bread.**

Breakfast:

- Cereals soaked or cooked in milk such as Ready Brek, Weetabix, porridge.
- Eggs: boiled, scrambled or poached.
- ** Bread or toast, (cut the crusts off if needed) add butter / margarine and jam / marmalade / honey.
- Yogurt

Between meal drinks and snacks:

- Milky drinks such as ‘cocoa’, ‘Horlicks’ (add extra sugar. Be careful if you have diabetes).
- Drinking chocolate (add extra sugar. Be careful if you have diabetes).
- Coffee made with milk (add extra sugar. Be careful if you have diabetes).
- Milk
- Complan
- Fruit juice such as orange, cranberry.
- Soft snack such as sponge cake or biscuit softened/ dunked in warm milk, tea or milky coffee.
- Full fat yogurt or soft pudding. See pudding list.
- Crisps that melt in the mouth such as Skips, Quavers, Wotsits.

Snack meal ideas:

- Smooth soup (homemade, packet or tinned). Avoid chunky soups like minestrone. Try adding grated cheese. Condensed cream of soups such as Campbell’s can be made up with milk, Tomato / Chicken / Mushroom Asparagus.
- ** Scrambled, poached or boiled egg, and tinned chopped tomatoes / baked beans with bread and butter.
- Corned beef, tinned ham, baked beans served with tinned spaghetti or potato.
- ** Soft sandwich such as cream cheese, pate, tuna, egg mayonnaise, chicken mayonnaise.

Main meal ideas:

- Minced/ soft and tender beef, lamb, pork, chicken or turkey
- Shepherds pie/ cottage pie
- Omelette (plain or with cheese)
- Soft fish in sauce such as cheese, parsley or white sauce
- Cauliflower cheese, broccoli cheese, cheese soufflé
- Meat curry or casserole
- Vegetable or lentil stew / curries, dhal (well-cooked)
- Quorn mince / lentil bolognese
- Quorn pieces or tofu in sauce

Serve the above with creamed potatoes, instant mashed potatoes, soft boiled potatoes, soft chips in gravy or well cooked pasta tossed in butter/ margarine and soft vegetables such as carrots and swede, (mashed if needed) with butter, gravy or sauce such as white sauce.

- Pasta dishes such as spaghetti bolognaise. Baked pasta dishes such as lasagne may have a hard/ chewy texture especially on top layer so may not be suitable for this diet.
- Risotto

Puddings:

- Sponge pudding and custard / cream
- Ice-cream
- Milk pudding such as rice, tapioca, sago, semolina or custard served with jam/ honey/ marmalade/ cream/ sugar/ soft or puréed fruit.
- Stewed fruit/ tinned soft fruit in syrup served with custard, evaporated, condensed milk or cream.
- Egg custard
- Fromage frais (full fat)
- Crème caramel
- Trifle (with soft fruit)
- Yogurt such as thick and creamy
- Mousse
- Blancmange
- Milk jelly/ jelly
- ‘Instant whip’, ‘Angel Delight’
- Mashed banana and ice-cream/ custard/ evaporated milk.

Try adding the following to your puddings:

- Cream
- Full cream milk
- Natural yogurt (not low fat)
- ‘Complan’ – neutral flavour
- Condensed/ evaporated milk

Store cupboard ideas

- Breakfast cereal and porridge oats, Ready Brek.
- Tinned and packet soups, such as cream of chicken, tomato, mushroom and lentil.
- Tinned meats, such as cooked ham, corned beef and minced beef.
- Tinned fish, such as tuna mayonnaise, salmon and sardines (take care with bones).
- Tinned pasta, such as macaroni cheese, spaghetti bolognaise.
- Packets of pasta in sauce.
- Powdered potato/ instant mash.
- Tinned milk puddings such as custard, semolina and creamed rice.
- Packet mousses, instant whip and jelly.
- Long-life products such as ultra-high temperature (UHT) milk, fruit juice, yogurts, ready-made custard pots.
- Powdered drinks such as Horlicks, Ovaltine, cocoa, drinking chocolate.
- Tinned cream evaporated and condensed milk.

If you are trying to gain weight, then avoid ‘low fat’ or ‘diet’ products.

What to do if you are losing weight

If you are losing weight, you can add extra nourishment to the food that you are managing to eat. By doing this you will get more energy and protein. This will help to maintain weight or prevent further weight loss.

- **Milk:** use full cream milk. To make fortified milk, add 2 to 4 tablespoons of milk powder (such as Marvel) to 1 pint of full fat milk. Use this milk whenever you use milk such as in drinks, puddings, mashed potato and sauces. 1 tablespoon of milk powder can also be added to porridge or soup.
- **Cheese:** add grated cheese to cooked vegetables, mashed potato, soups and sauces.
- **Soup:** make packet soups with fortified milk or add 2 tablespoons of milk powder or cream to tinned or packet soup. You could also try savoury ‘Complan’. These are available from your chemist and some supermarkets.
- **Butter / Margarine / Oil:** use plenty on pasta, potatoes and vegetables.
- **Double cream:** add to soup, potato, cereals, milk puddings and milky drinks.
- **Ice-cream / evaporated milk / condensed milk / full fat yogurt / custard:** use on puddings.
- **Sugar / syrup / honey (be careful if you have diabetes): add** to drinks, desserts and cereals.

Weight chart

Some people find it useful to write down their weight. If you would like to keep a record of your weight you can do that here. There is no need to weigh yourself more than once per week.

Date	Weight

Contact details

Nutrition and Dietetic Service: _

Adult Speech and Language Therapy Service: _

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