Trusted Information Creator
Patient Information Forum

NHS
University Hospitals of Leicester
NHS Trust

Meal ideas and advice when you need to follow a level 4 pureed diet

Nutrition and Dietetics

Adult Speech and Language Therapy

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: November 2026
Next review: November 2029
Leaflet number: 1409 Version: 3

Main points

- Your food needs to be smooth (consistency of plain yogurt).
- You may need to blend and/ or sieve your food.
- You should try to have lots of different foods in your diet.
- Some foods should be avoided (see page 3).

Introduction

You may need a puréed diet as advised by a speech and language therapist if you are having difficulty with:

- biting, chewing or swallowing your food,
- coughing during or after eating,
- or if your tongue control is reduced due to illness,

A puréed diet may also be easier to eat if you have pain on chewing or swallowing, missing teeth or poorly fitting dentures.

It is important that you keep eating lots of different types of food to make sure you get all the vitamins and minerals that your body needs to stay healthy.

This leaflet will give you ideas on what to eat to keep your meals a smooth consistency. It will give you advice on how to get the most out of your meal times.

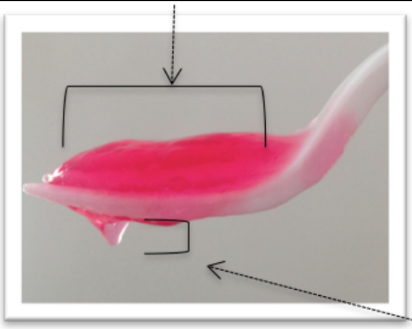
Many people find it difficult to keep their weight steady while eating a pureed diet. The information in this leaflet will give you ideas on how to make your meals as nourishing as possible. This will stop you losing weight and help you gain weight if you need to.

What is a pureed diet?

A pureed diet is made up of foods which are very soft and moist. They are pureed in a liquidiser or food processor and passed through a sieve, if needed, to leave a smooth texture without lumps or ‘bits’.

- Often eaten with a spoon (a fork is possible).
- Cannot be drunk from a cup/ sucked through a straw.
- Does not need chewing.
- Can be piped, layered or moulded.
- Falls off a spoon in a single spoonful when tilted and continues to hold shape on a plate.
- Moves slowly under gravity but cannot be poured.
- Does not contain lumps and is not sticky, if pureed food pressed with a fork would keep a dented pattern.
- You may need to mix in extra thick sauce for example, cheese sauce or gravy, to make the right consistency.
- Each food should be pureed separately to keep the different flavours.
- Liquid must not separate from solid. Any sauce/ gravy should be the same thickness as the food.

Extremely thick liquids sit in a mound or pile above the fork.



A small amount may flow through and form a tail below the fork.

IDDSI Fork Drip Test

Liquid does **not** dollop, or drip continuously through the fork prongs.



IDDSI Spoon Tilt Test

Sample holds its shapes on the spoon and falls off fairly easily if the spoon is titled or lightly flicked.

Sample should **not** be firm or sticky.

Pureed food must pass both tests!

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative v2.2 2026 https://iddsi.org/framework/

Food textures to avoid on a pureed diet

Food textures to avoid	Examples of foods to avoid
Mixed thin and thick textures	Soup with pieces of food, cereal with milk
Hard or dry food	Nuts, raw vegetables (for example, carrot, cauliflower, broccoli), dry cakes, bread, dry cereal
Tough and stringy food	Steak, pineapple, celery
Chewy food	Lollies, sweets, 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 food	Corn chips, crisps
Crumbly bits	Dry cake crumble, dry biscuits
Pips, seeds	Apple seeds, pumpkin seeds, white of an orange
Foods with skins or outer shell	Peas, grapes, sausage skin, chicken skin, salmon skin
Foods with husks	Corn, shredded wheat, bran
Bone or gristle	Chicken bones, fish bones, meat with gristle
Round, long shaped food	Sausage, grape
Sticky or gummy food	Nut butters, overcooked oatmeal/ porridge, edible gelatine, sticky rice cakes
Stringy food	Beans, rhubarb
‘Floppy’ foods	Lettuce, cucumber, uncooked baby spinach leaves
‘Juicy’ food	Where juice separates from the food piece in the mouth, for example, watermelon
Visible lumps	Lumps in pureed food or yogurt

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

Your dietitian or speech and language therapist will be happy to help you. Please give them a call if you are worried or have any questions about your diet or swallowing.

Practical tips

We all must eat, and for most of us it is an enjoyable experience, often involving family and friends. Eating a puréed diet may mean a change from your normal routine, but by following these ideas you can hopefully still enjoy your food:

1. Have a wide range of foods. This will provide you with lots of different nutrients to keep you healthy and stop you getting bored.
2. Make the food look appetising choosing food of different colours. Purée each food separately, so it keeps its own colour and flavour.
3. Once you have puréed food, as puréeing will make hot food cooler, warm it up again in a pan or microwave. It will also warm up cold foods or drinks, so if you are making milkshakes, cold puréed puddings. Chill the food or drink in the fridge before serving.
4. You may find it easier to prepare food in bulk and then store it in your freezer. Make sure that the food is defrosted thoroughly before reheating. Ideally, plan ahead to leave enough time and space to defrost small amounts of food in the fridge.
5. Mix with a fork before serving to make sure liquid is not separating out and to achieve 1 texture.
6. Eat in a quiet, relaxed atmosphere and take your time. Sit upright during your meal.
7. Finish each mouthful before taking the next. Make sure your mouth is fully cleared at the end of meals.
8. If you are eating out, let the restaurant know beforehand that you have a special diet and what your needs are. Most places will be happy to cater for you. If you know you take longer to eat, think about ordering a main course and ask for that while everyone else is eating their starter. You may then be ready for dessert at the same time as everyone else.
9. If you are struggling to cook or shop on a regular basis, make use of convenience foods that need very little preparation or consider ordering pre-prepared food from delivery companies (see links to these and store cupboard ideas on page 9).
10. If possible, weigh yourself once a week. If you are losing weight or your appetite is poor, please make sure you are following the ideas on page 6 and 7.

Preparing and serving your food

Food must be cooked until it is soft and then puréed to a smooth consistency. Food may need to be sieved and thickened to create the correct consistency.

Equipment you will need

- A hand blender can be used for small quantities of food or a food processor or liquidiser can be useful.
- A sieve can be used to remove husks, lumps and other bits that stop your food from being a smooth consistency.

Presentation: 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 such as carrots or broccoli.

Thickening foods: Once you have puréed your food, you may need to thicken it, if this has been recommended by the speech and language therapist. You can use things such as mashed potato (must be really smooth, no lumps), potato flakes, cornflour, custard powder, instant sauce or gravy granules, as well as the thickening powder you may be using for your drinks (if recommended by your speech and language therapist).

Balanced diet

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

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

- Puréed meat or fish in sauce
- Puréed beans, lentils or pulses
- Cheese in sauce

Starchy foods: gives energy, have a food from this group at least 3 times a day:

- 'Ready Brek', or smooth instant porridge or Weetabix with warm milk (sieve if needed)
- Mashed potato (no lumps) or pasta/ rice pureed with a sauce.

Vegetables: which will cook until soft and can be puréed for example:

- Carrots
- Turnips or swede
- Cauliflower or Broccoli
- Parsnip

Fruit: try to have 2 portions of fruit a day which should be stewed and puréed for example:

- Mango
- Apple (without the skin)
- Tinned peaches or pears
- Fruit which can be puréed and sieved if needed or put in a drink for example banana or strawberry milkshake. Thickener may need to be added if on thickened fluids.

Dairy products: has protein and calcium, try to have the amount equal to at least 1 pint of milk per day:

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

Do not use reduced fat options, and wherever possible make custard with whole milk.

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

Make sure you purée and sieve everything you need to.

Problems you may have

Poor appetite/ weight loss: if you have a small appetite or find that you are losing weight, you should make your foods more nourishing. There are some ideas below on how to do this.

Useful tips:

- Try to have small meals/ snacks often. Aim for 3 small meals and 2 to 3 snacks per day that is 'little and often'.
- If you cannot manage a full meal try instead to have a milkshake, soup or pudding to which you have added a fortifier like 'Complan' (these are available from the chemist or supermarket).
- Take only sips of drinks with a meal, as these can be quite filling. Remember to have additional drinks between meals/ snacks.
- Extra nourishment can be added to your food in different ways for example:
    - Use whole milk to make milk puddings, milky drinks and sauces.
    - Add 4 tablespoons of milk powder (for example, 'Marvel') to 1 pint of whole milk. Use this in hot drinks, puddings, mashed potato (no lumps) and sauces. Make packet soups with fortified milk or add 2 tablespoons of milk powder to smooth tinned or packet soup.
    - Add grated cheese to vegetables, potato, soups and sauces.
    - Add extra butter/ margarine/ oil to sauces, potatoes, vegetables and pasta.
    - Use double cream or plain Greek yogurt in soups, curries, sauces, cereals, potatoes and puddings like custard.
    - Add extra sugar, syrup, jam without bits or honey into puddings, drinks or cereals (caution if you have diabetes).
    - Make sure meals are puréed with nourishing fluids such as thick gravy or sauces, not just water.
    - Make sure that food is of a smooth, thick consistency when serving.

If you continue to lose weight, then please ring your dietitian for some more advice.

Note: remember to thicken all drinks and foods if advised by a speech and language therapist.

Puree meal ideas

Breakfast:

- ‘Ready Brek’ smooth instant porridge (sieve if bits), or ‘Weetabix’ (well soaked with warm milk and sugar, no separate liquid).
- Puréed fruit and full fat smooth yogurt.

Between meal snacks:

- Milky drink such as ‘Ovaltine’, ‘Horlicks’ or ‘Complan’ or smooth soup (*see below) may need to be thickened. Check with your speech and language therapist.
- Puréed stewed fruit.
- Full fat smooth yogurt, custard pot or soft pudding (see pudding list on next page).
- Avocado puréed with yogurt/ mayonnaise.
- Hummus/ smooth salmon mousse.

Snack and main meal ideas:

- Cream of tomato soup (smooth, no bits).
- Other smooth soups that have been puréed or sieved should contain meat, fish, lentils or have cheese, cream added.

***Note: soups need to be of a thick consistency or thickened, if needed, as per the speech and language therapist’s recommendations.**

All the following foods will need blending and sieving

- Hard boiled egg, puréed with salad cream/ mayonnaise to a soft, moist paste.
- Very smooth pâté.
- Cauliflower/ broccoli cheese, well cooked.
- Minced meat, cooked with root vegetables (no onion, tomato skins or peas).
- Sieved tinned fish mixed with mayonnaise (for example, tuna, salmon).
- Boil-in-bag fish with sauce.
- Lentils: cooked in stock/ sauce for example, dhal or lentil casserole.
- Vegetable/ tofu curry or stew.
- Quorn mince/ minced meat bolognaise.

The above could be served with:

- Creamed or instant mashed potatoes (no lumps).
- Well cooked pasta puréed with sauce or with your main dish.
- Well cooked rice puréed with sauce or with your main dish for example curry.

And puréed soft cooked vegetables for example, root vegetables, broccoli tops, baked beans/ mushy peas (sieved) or puréed tomatoes (either tinned or fresh, skinned and deseeded first) and sieved.

Puddings:

Make all desserts, where applicable, with full cream milk:

- Yogurt, smooth with no ‘bits’.
- Fromage frais, smooth with no ‘bits’.
- Mousse with no bits like chocolate.or Blancmange.
- Instant Whip.
- Stewed or tinned fruit which has been puréed and sieved.
- Mashed banana, mixed with cream, evaporated milk or custard and puréed and sieved.
- Custard (thick).
- Crème caramel.
- Fruit smoothies (these may need sieving).
- Milkshakes.

Example of meal plan

Breakfast:

Smooth instant porridge or ‘Ready Brek’ made with full cream milk and sugar.

Mid-morning:

Milky drink such as ‘Ovaltine’, ‘Horlicks’ or ‘Complan’.

Midday meal:

Puréed mince and gravy, smooth mashed potatoes, puréed vegetables, custard or smooth yogurt.

Mid-afternoon:

Puréed stewed fruit and thick cream, Greek yogurt, or custard.

Evening meal:

Pureed cauliflower cheese, smooth mashed potatoes, mousse.

Bedtime:

Smooth yogurt, custard, fromage frais or milky drink.

Buying ready prepared pureed meals

The following companies provide meals delivered to your door:

- W**iltshire Farm Foods:** softer foods range, includes puree classic and petite meals, puree breakfasts, sandwiches, snacks and desserts.

  0800 077 3100 / www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com

- **Simply puree:** a range of texture modified meals and puddings.

  0191 4560456 / www.simplyfoodsolutions.co.uk

- **Oakhouse foods:** a selection of pureed meals as part of softer foods range.

  0333 370 6700 / www.oakhousefoods.co.uk

Store cupboard ideas

Suitable convenience foods to keep in your store cupboard which can be pureed to the correct consistency are:

- Tinned minced meat, corned beef, fish,
- Tinned or packet soup (without bits). May need to be thickened if on thickened fluids.
- Tinned cream/ evaporated milk,
- 'Ready Brek' or smooth instant porridge,
- Custard/ instant whip/ milk puddings,
- Tinned fruit (to make milkshakes),
- Instant mashed potato,
- Pasta/ pasta sauces,
- Tinned vegetables,
- Gravy granules,
- Milk powder,
- Aymes shakes, Complan,
- Puree fruit sachets,

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: _

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit 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

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہِ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أُخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો.

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead
or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research

Re-use of this leaflet is restricted by Creative Commons license