

## Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

# Soft Diet

### For those who have difficulty chewing and swallowing solid food

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dietitian: \_\_\_\_\_

If you are under the care of a Speech and Language Therapist it is important that you follow the advice provided by them. Certain foods and fluids may not be appropriate depending on your swallowing ability i.e. more liquid foods or foods that melt to a liquid e.g. ice-cream or jelly. Speak with your Speech and Language therapist if you are on thickened fluids, to check if these foods are suitable or not.

### Soft Diet

If you have difficulty chewing or swallowing food, you may need a soft diet. The aim of this advice booklet is to give ideas for suitable meal choices, and to give useful tips on how to make mealtimes as enjoyable as possible.

If you have recently lost weight (unintentionally) or are underweight, you will find some useful ideas on how to fortify foods to make them as nourishing as possible.

### Throughout the day these soft foods need to provide:

- **Calories** – to help prevent weight loss and provide energy.
- **Protein** – for growth and repair of tissues / muscle.
- **Vitamins and minerals** – for protection and general good health.

If you have already been given advice by a speech therapist to thicken food and drinks, you must continue to follow their advice. If you are unsure, ask your dietitian or speech therapist.

## What should I have?

### High Calorie/ Energy Rich Foods

Fat and sugar are concentrated sources of energy (calories). These should be added to foods (where possible) if you have lost weight unintentionally/ are struggling to gain weight. Otherwise they can be included as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

#### Food fortification can be used to increase energy intake in the following ways:

**Sugar / syrup** – add to drinks, cereals, puddings.

**Fats** – butter or margarine can be added to mashed potatoes and to well-cooked vegetables before being liquidised. Cream can be added to soups, sauces, pureed fruit and puddings.

**Cereals** – breakfast cereals e.g. porridge, Weetabix, Ready Brek. Add jam, syrup or honey for extra calories. Please avoid cereals that do not blend with milk.

**Potatoes** – mashed with extra milk/cream. Add cheese, butter or margarine to increase calories.

**Ground/ flaked rice, semolina, custard or blancmange** – make using fortified milk.

**Ice cream** – choose thick dairy cream types.

Speak to your speech therapist if you are on thickened fluid as ice cream may not be appropriate.

### Fruit and Vegetables: aim to have 5 portions daily

These are important to give a balanced diet. Fruit can be fresh, tinned, mashed, stewed or juiced. Well-cooked vegetables can be mashed if needed. Avoid stringy or fibrous fruits and vegetables e.g. citrus fruit, rhubarb, pineapple, celery, asparagus, broccoli stalks, lettuce, runner beans etc. Also avoid fruit and vegetables with skins and pips e.g. peas, broad beans, sweetcorn and grapes etc. Aim to have at least one glass of fruit juice to ensure adequate vitamin C intake.

### Protein foods: aim to have 3 – 4 servings daily

**Milk** – if you need more calories try to have 1-2 pints of full fat (blue top) milk daily. Otherwise you can use whole, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk. Use it in: drinks, puddings, sauces, cereals, whip-type desserts, soups, milkshakes.

**Fortified milk** – to add extra protein add 4 tbsp of skimmed milk powder to one pint of full fat milk and then use like ordinary milk. Milk powder can also be stirred into drinks, porridge, soups, custard, rice pudding etc. It is best to mix the milk powder into a paste with some of the liquid before adding it to food/ drink to avoid lumps.

**Cheese** – can be grated finely into soups, sauces and creamed potato. Ensure cheese is fully melted and mixed in (not stringy) or use soft cheese.

**Crème fraiche** – can be added to sauces, puddings and soups. Choose full fat to give extra calories.

**Eggs** – beaten into milk for milk puddings, custard and sauces prior to cooking. Always make sure when using eggs that they are thoroughly cooked.

**Meat, poultry, fish** – add gravy or sauces if needed. Fish can be flaked into cheese or parsley sauce. Avoid tough or chewy meat.

**Pulses** – can be added to stews and casseroles, or eaten as an accompaniment. Choose ones that do not have skins e.g. chickpeas, red lentils etc. Avoid those with skins e.g. baked beans etc.

**Meat alternatives** – soya mince, Quorn, tofu are all soft in texture – you can marinade first to give more flavour.

**Yoghurts/ mousses** – choose smooth options (avoid any containing ‘bits’). Try yoghurt drinks. Choose full fat rather than low fat / diet options.

## Ideas for Meals

It is best to eat small amounts of soft food frequently e.g. every one to two hours, rather than trying to have large amounts at a time. Try to include as wide a variety of foods as you can to make your diet more interesting and help stimulate your appetite.

## Breakfast

Fruit juice/ pureed fruit/ mashed banana and/ or Greek or custard-style yoghurt.

Cereal e.g. porridge made with milk, Weetabix softened in milk (with added sugar or syrup to increase the calories).

Eggs – scrambled / boiled / poached / fried.

Skinless sausages.

## Main meal

Shepherds/ cottage pie, fish pie (no pastry).

Fish in sauce.

Lasagne (soft topping).

Macaroni cheese.

Mashed / chopped pasta, spaghetti bolognese.

Minced meats / chicken in sauce.

Corned beef hash.

Soft-cooked cauliflower cheese.

Soft cheese omelette.

Cheese soufflé.

Scrambled egg.

Lentil dahl.

Mixed curry (e.g. soft vegetables/ mincemeat).

Soup.

Soft potato cakes with fish/ egg/ mince/ cheese and served with a sauce.

## Accompaniments

The above meals can be served with: Soft chapatti, rice, naan, mashed potato (including sweet potato), mushy peas, creamed corn, well-cooked mashed vegetables e.g. swede, carrot, cauliflower, broccoli, parsnip, turnip, squashes, okra, plantain.

## Puddings

Yoghurts – natural, French-style, Greek, set, fruit or thick and creamy.

Fromage frais, fools, mousses, milk jelly, blancmange, junket, crème caramel, pannacotte, kulfi.

Soft ice-cream (if suitable), custard, trifle.

Ground or flaked rice pudding / semolina / sago.

Jelly (made with milk / evaporated milk), instant desserts, custard.

Baked egg custard (no pastry).

Cakes – add custard/cream to make softer.

Mashed / pureed / stewed / tinned fruit – can add or blend with cream/ evaporated or condensed milk/ custard/ ice-cream (if suitable) / yoghurt / crème fraiche.

Bread and butter pudding (no crusts)

## Between Meals

It is important to eat little and often. The following food and drinks make nourishing between-meal snacks:

Sponge cake softened with custard/cream, milky drinks, custards, mousses, fruit juice, milk puddings, ice-cream, soft fruit, yoghurt, food supplements (sweet or savoury).

## Food Supplements

Food supplements may be appropriate if you are struggling to eat enough to meet your nutritional needs. Some food supplements can be bought over the counter in larger supermarkets, chemists and health food shops. These come as a powder sachet, which are made into a drink or soup using milk or water e.g. Build Up (soups/ shakes) or Complan (soups/ shakes).

These are best taken in-between meals as taking them as a meal replacement can be counterproductive.

There are other supplements available which have to be prescribed by your doctor or dietitian. Ask your dietitian if these supplements are appropriate/ which may be the best one for you. Check with your Speech and Language therapist whether or not you will need to thicken these drinks.

## Store Cupboard Ideas

If you find it more difficult to get to the shops, its useful to have some basic foods at home. You may also want to consider online food shopping or meal delivery services. Ask you dietitian for guidance on ordering texture-modified meals.

## Here are a few suggestions:

### Milk

Long-life, dried, evaporated, condensed milk, tinned cream.

### Meat and Fish

Tinned minced beef or stew, corned beef, ham, sardines, pilchards, tuna, chicken in sauce.

### Drinks

Cocoa, malted milk, milkshake syrups/ powders, meal replacement drinks, tinned or packet soups.

### Fruit, vegetables and fruit juice

Tinned carrots, tinned fruit etc, red lentils, chickpeas, long-life pure fruit juice, instant mashed potato.

### Desserts

Ready-made custard/ rice pudding/ jelly pots (if suitable), long-life yoghurt or mousses.

### Cereals

Breakfast cereals including porridge or instant oats, couscous, polenta, pasta and rice.

### Puddings

Tinned milk puddings, tinned/ powder custard, instant desserts

## Freezer ideas

Meats, ready meals, vegetables, fish portions, fish fingers, bread and rolls, ice-cream (if suitable).

Remember to only buy food that you like and will use! Store cupboard foods don't keep forever, so use them from time to time and replace them with new ones. Check the 'use by' dates on tins and packets regularly.

## Oral Hygiene

### Even if you have difficulty eating, oral hygiene is still very important:

- Clean your teeth with fluoride toothpaste at least twice a day.
- If you have dentures, clean them after every meal and soak them overnight in a suitable denture-cleansing solution.
- Food may taste unpleasant if your tongue becomes 'coated' and this may discourage you from eating.  
Ask your doctor or nurse about suitable mouthwashes. Many that you can buy contain alcohol that can make your mouth feel more uncomfortable; look for alcohol-free ones.
- If your lips become cracked or sore, apply a lip balm.

**If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :**

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics  
Dietetic Service Manager  
Dietetic Department

Calderdale Royal Hospital  
Telephone: 01422 224267

or

Huddersfield Royal Infirmary  
Telephone: 01484 342749

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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