

# LEVEL 7 REGULAR : EASY TO CHEW DIET ADVICE

## Nutrition and Dietetic Service

## Adult Speech and Language Therapy Service

## Information for Patients

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### INTRODUCTION

If you are having difficulty with chewing hard foods or usually choose soft foods, for example due to a lack of teeth or a sore mouth, it may be beneficial for you to have an **easy to chew** diet. It may also be a good choice if you are recovering post illness. However, a Speech and Language Therapist may have recommended this diet for you and discussed the reasons for this recommendation. It is important that you follow this advice.

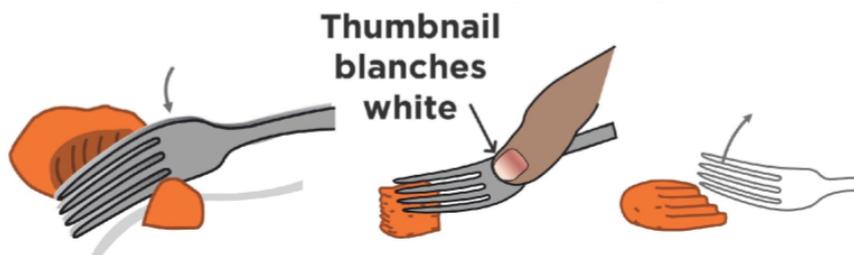
The aim of this leaflet is to give you ideas for suitable meal choices, as well as useful tips on how to make mealtimes as enjoyable as possible.

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?

Normal, everyday foods of a soft / tender texture, which are easy to chew can be cut or broken apart with the side of a fork or spoon.

- Any method can be used to eat these foods e.g. fork, spoon, fingers
- May include 'mixed thin & thick' texture foods and drinks together but ask your Speech & Language therapist for advice on this
- Food piece size is not restricted in level 7 so can be a range of sizes i.e. bigger / smaller than 1.5 x 1.5 cm
- You should be able to 'bite off' pieces of tender food and 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 can't be swallowed e.g. 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 blanches to white, then lift the fork to see that the food is completely



*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 Fork Pressure Test!*

#### **IDDSI Fork Pressure Test**

*To make sure the food is soft enough, press down on the fork until the thumbnail blanches to white, then lift the fork 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 and moist.
- 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 fibrous parts e.g 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 e.g. melon.
- Vegetables – boiled / steamed until tender. Stir fried vegetables maybe too firm for this level.
- Cereal – served with texture softened. Excess liquid should be drained before serving.
- Rice – no special cooking requirements at this level.
- **Bread / sandwiches (and appropriate sandwich fillings) – check with your Speech and Language Therapist for advice on this.**
- **N.B. May include mixed ‘thin and thick texture’ food and liquids together – liaise with your Speech & Language Therapist for advice on this.**

## FOOD TEXTURES TO AVOID IF ON EASY TO CHEW DIET

Food characteristic to AVOID	Examples of food to AVOID
Hard or dry food	Nuts, raw vegetables ( e.g. 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.

1. Adding sauces to drier foods may make them easier to chew and swallow e.g. thick gravy, parsley sauce, custard, double cream, or dunking biscuits in a hot drink.
2. Include a variety of foods to avoid boredom (see food choices ideas on page 4 –5).
3. The way food is presented can help to increase your appetite. Meals can be served with garnishes such as lemon wedges and parsley (we do not suggest you eat these).
4. Foods should be served at the correct temperature to bring out the flavour.
5. Try to eat slowly and serve a small amount at a time so your food doesn't 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.
6. Eat in a quiet and relaxed atmosphere where there is no hurry to finish and sit upright during your meal.
7. Finish one mouthful before taking the next. If you feel any food is at the back of your throat, swallow again before continuing with your meal.
8. If you are finding it difficult to swallow food or fluids ask your GP to refer you a Speech and Language Therapist unless you are already known to a specialist team.

9. If you are unable to manage three meals a day, try eating 'little and often' and take advantage of times when your appetite is good.
10. Have nourishing snacks or drinks handy for when you feel hungry e.g. mousses, milkshake, yogurts and custard. See page 5 for more ideas.
11. Drinks such as water, tea and coffee provide 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.
12. A small amount of alcohol helps to stimulate your appetite (check with your Doctor first) e.g. a small glass of sherry or brandy.
13. If you have a sore mouth, it may be useful to avoid spicy and acidic foods or drinks e.g. 'hot' curries, chili, acidic fruit and juices such as tomatoes, pineapple and orange.
14. Weigh yourself once a week. If you find that you are losing weight, contact your Dietitian or District Nurse 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 one of these twice per 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:** which will cook until soft e.g.

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

**Fruit:** try to have 2 portions a day of stewed / tinned/ soft fruit e.g.

- Mango
- Banana
- Stewed / baked apple (without the skin)
- Tinned peaches or pears

- Fruit which can be pureed and sieved if necessary or put in a drink e.g. 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) =  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a pint
- 30g/1oz cheese =  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a pint

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

**Fatty & sugary foods:** add more of these foods if you need to gain weight e.g. butter, margarine, oil, cream or grated cheese, sugar, honey or syrup.

## EASY TO CHEW MEAL IDEAS

**\*\* Please remember if you are under a Speech & Language Therapist, refer to their advice regarding BREAD .**

### BREAKFAST

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

### BETWEEN MEAL DRINKS AND SNACKS

- Milky drinks e.g. 'Cocoa', 'Horlicks'      Add extra
- Drinking Chocolate      sugar      – caution if you have
- Coffee made with milk      to these      diabetes
- Milk
- Complan
- Fruit juice e.g. orange, cranberry
- Soft snack e.g. 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 mouth – e.g. Skips, Quavers, Wotsits

### SNACK MEAL IDEAS

- Smooth soup (home-made, packet or tinned) avoid minestrone etc. Try adding grated cheese. Condensed Cream of soups e.g. Campbell's can be made up with milk – Tomato / Chicken / Mushroom Asparagus

- Corned beef, tinned ham, baked beans served with tinned spaghetti or potato
- \*\* Soft sandwich e.g. cream cheese, pate, tuna, egg mayonnaise, chicken mayonnaise

### MAIN MEAL IDEAS

- Minced / soft & tender beef, lamb, pork, chicken or turkey
- Shepherds pie/cottage pie
- Omelette (plain or with cheese)
- Soft fish in sauce e.g. 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 with creamed potatoes, instant mashed potatoes, soft boiled potatoes, soft chips in gravy or well cooked pasta tossed in butter/margarine and soft vegetables e.g. carrots and swede, (mashed if necessary) with butter, gravy or sauce e.g. white sauce.

- Pasta dishes such as spaghetti bolognese (NB baked pasta dishes e.g. 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 e.g. 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 –e.g. 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, e.g. cream of chicken, tomato, mushroom and lentil
- Tinned meats, e.g. cooked ham, corned beef and minced beef
- Tinned fish, e.g. tuna mayonnaise, salmon and sardines (take care with bones)
- Tinned pasta, e.g. macaroni cheese, spaghetti bolognese
- 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 e.g. UHT milk, fruit juice, yogurts, ready made custard pots
- Powdered drinks e.g. Horlicks, Ovaltine, Cocoa, drinking chocolate
- Tinned cream evaporated and condensed milk.

**Nb.** 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 receive more energy and protein, which will help to maintain weight or prevent further weight loss.

### MILK

Use full cream milk. To make fortified milk, add 2-4 tablespoons of milk powder (e.g. Marvel) to 1 pint of full fat milk. Use this milk whenever you use milk e.g. 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 CREAM YOGURT/CUSTARD

Use on puddings.

### SUGAR / SYRUP / HONEY (caution 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

Nutrition and Dietetic Service / Adult Speech and Language Therapy Service Contact Details:

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

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Developed, produced and reviewed by Leicestershire Nutrition and Dietetic Services –  
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or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)