

## Information Prescriptions

Information Prescriptions are a quick and easy way to provide information about your condition and local services.

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

### How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

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

If you require an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version please ask for assistance.

With thanks to Dietitians and Speech and Language Therapists who have compiled this information

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# Soft diet

## Patient Information Leaflet

Issued by: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Safe & compassionate care,

every time



## Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because you or the person you are caring for have been having problems swallowing food or drinks. This is called 'dysphagia'.

### What is dysphagia?

Dysphagia can be one or more of the following:

- Finding it hard to swallow food or drinks
- Finding it hard to keep food and drinks in the mouth
- Finding it hard to chew food
- Finding food left in your mouth after eating
- Food or drink 'going down the wrong way' making you cough

Food or drink that 'goes down the wrong way' can cause chest infections which can be very serious.

Some people who have dysphagia do not choke on food or drink even if it 'goes down the wrong way'. This is not always a good sign because it means that food or drink can 'go down the wrong way' without the person even being aware of it.

This is why it is very important to follow the advice that you have been given in this leaflet.

If you notice any of the following contact your speech and language therapist (SLT) or re-refer yourself to a speech and language therapist:

- Coughing or choking when eating or drinking
- Gurgly, wet voice after eating or drinking
- Food staying in the mouth after eating
- Regular chest infections e.g. every 6 -10 weeks throughout the year
- Unplanned weight loss

This leaflet has been designed to help you choose foods that can make your swallowing easier and safer. 1

## What is a soft diet?

- Food is soft, tender and moist, but needs some chewing.
- It can be mashed with a fork.
- Food usually requires a thick, smooth sauce, gravy or custard to make it moist and therefore easier to chew and swallow.
- There should be no hard, tough, chewy, fibrous, stringy, dry, crispy or crumbly bits.
- Meat and vegetables should be well cooked so that they are soft and tender.
- Any large pieces of food should be cut up into smaller pieces

Soft food is often the same food that you would normally choose, but there may be some things which you need to avoid.

## Fortifying foods continued

**To sweet foods** - add full fat yoghurt, cream, evaporated milk, dried skimmed milk powder, custard, ice-cream (check with your SLT whether this is suitable for you), sugar, glucose, honey, syrup, seedless jam, butter or margarine (not low fat)

For example:

- **to puddings e.g. sponge** add full fat/ Greek yoghurt, evaporated milk, custard, ice-cream (check with your SLT whether this is suitable for you), cream, sugar, glucose, honey, syrup, seedless jam, butter or margarine (avoid low fat spread),
- **to milky drinks** add dried skimmed milk powder, evaporated milk, ice-cream, cream
- **to breakfast cereals or porridge** add fortified milk, evaporated milk, full fat/ Greek yoghurt, cream, sugar, glucose, honey, golden syrup

## Fortifying food

If you have lost weight without trying to or if you are a low weight for your height your Dietitian may advise you to fortify your food. This is a way of increasing the nutrient and energy content of your food and drink without increasing your portion sizes.

Fortifying foods can make it easier for you to eat enough calories and protein every day.

**Fortified milk** - Add 4 tablespoons of dried skimmed milk powder to each pint of full fat milk and use this as you would use normal milk (e.g. in drinks, porridge, custard)

**To savoury foods** - add cheese, fortified milk, dried skimmed milk powder, gravy, cream, crème fraîche, or butter/margarine (avoid low fat spread)

For example:

- **to thick, smooth soups** add grated cheese, dried skimmed milk powder, evaporated milk, cream. Try making cuppa soup with fortified milk instead of water.
- **to sauces** add evaporated milk, full fat natural yoghurt, grated cheese, smooth nut butter, butter or margarine cream
- **to mashed potato** add grated cheese, full fat mayonnaise or salad cream, milk based sauces, cream, butter or margarine (avoid low fat spread) or olive oil
- **to vegetables** add grated cheese, full fat natural yoghurt, full fat mayonnaise, butter, margarine (avoid low fat spread) or olive oil.

## High risk foods to avoid

- Stringy textures e.g. pineapple, runner beans, celery, lettuce
- Skins on vegetable and fruit e.g. broad beans, baked beans, soya beans, peas, sweetcorn, grapes
- Mixed consistency foods e.g. cereals which do not blend with milk (e.g. muesli, corn flakes), mince with thin gravy, soup with lumps
- Crunchy or crumbly foods e.g. toast, flaky pastry, pie crusts, crumble, dry biscuits, crisps, dry cake
- Hard foods e.g. boiled sweets, toffees, nuts, seeds
- Wholegrains (e.g. granary bread) and grains with skins e.g. wild rice
- Bread e.g. sandwiches, rolls, bread and butter

Try to include the following daily:

- Eat little and often – e.g. 3 small meals and 2 - 3 snacks
- 3 portions of full fat milk or milk containing foods (e.g. cheese in a pureed meal, thick and creamy yogurt (may need to be sieved to remove fruit pieces))
- 3 portions of meat, chicken, fish, eggs, quorn, soya, lentils or beans (these may need to be pushed through a sieve to remove skins)
- 3 portions of potatoes, pasta or cereal
- 5 portions of fruit and vegetables
- At least 6 – 8 mugs or glasses of fluid – you may need to thicken your drinks and your Speech and Language Therapist will advise you about this.
  - You may be advised to choose nourishing drinks (e.g. fruit juice; smoothies; milky drinks such as hot chocolate, milky coffee, milkshakes, yoghurt drinks, malted drinks (Ovaltine, Horlicks) – all these can be made with fortified milk – see **Fortifying food**)

## Menu Ideas

### Breakfast

- Yoghurt based smoothie drink
- Greek yoghurt, honey and soft tinned or fresh fruit
- Scrambled egg, skinless sausages cut into small pieces or mash with fork if required
- Weetabix / Oatibix (without dried fruit) with full fat milk and honey or sugar
- Ready Brek / porridge with full fat milk and jam or syrup
- Soft tinned fruit e.g. peaches, pears, mandarins
- Soft fruits e.g. bananas, strawberries

### Main Course

- Minced beef, pork, lamb, chicken or turkey in gravy
- Tender casserole made with small pieces of meat
- Moist curry with small, tender pieces of chicken, lentils (without skins) or vegetables
- Shepherds/cottage pie topped with mashed potato (remove any crunchy topping) served with extra gravy
- Corned beef hash with gravy
- Meat balls in gravy or tomato sauce, bolognaise
- Fish in parsley or cheese sauce
- Fish pie with mashed potato topping (remove any crunchy topping)
- Moist scrambled egg or mashed boiled/poached egg
- Risotto (ensure other ingredients are also suitable textures)
- Soft pasta dishes eg ravioli, lasagne (remove any crunchy topping)
- Macaroni cheese

### Main course - continued

- Potato mashed with cheese or butter
- Tinned spaghetti or ravioli in tomato sauce
- Mashed sweet potato, carrots or swede
- Soft boiled vegetables eg broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, carrots with white sauce or gravy
- Cauliflower cheese with plenty of sauce
- Ratatouille (tomato based sauce with mixed vegetables eg peppers and courgettes cooked on a low heat for a long time)
- Smooth, thick soups

**Helpful Hint** – Cook and serve food with sauces or gravy to help keep them moist

### Desserts

- Fruit / plain yoghurts or fromage frais (avoid those labelled low fat, virtually fat free, low sugar or diet)
- Stewed fruit with yoghurt, custard, ice-cream or cream
- Sponge pudding and custard
- Bread and butter pudding with custard, ice-cream or cream
- Tapioca, semolina or rice pudding
- Potted desserts (avoid those labelled low fat, virtually fat free, low sugar or diet) – custard, trifle, rice pudding, mousse, fruit fool, crème caramel
- Blancmange, Instant Whip, Angel Delight
- Ice cream and jelly (check with your SLT whether these are suitable for you)