



Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust  
Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust



## **Easy to chew**

Information for patients,  
relatives and carers

## Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)

My **speech therapist's** name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

### SLT recommendations

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Dietetics

My **dietitian's** name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Dietary recommendations

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Berkshire Healthcare Speech & Language Therapists 0118 938 2136

Berkshire Healthcare Dietitians:

East Berks: 01753 636 724

West Berks: 01635 273 710

## Why do I need to have an easy to chew diet?

Your swallow has been assessed by a qualified speech and language therapist. The assessment revealed that you need to avoid the high risk food on Page 8 due to your risk of:

- Choking/coughing.
- Repeated chest infections.
- Pneumonia.
- Weight loss.

## What is an easy to chew diet?

- Normal, everyday foods of soft, tender texture
- Solids and liquids can be mixed together (may include 'mixed thin and thick texture' food and liquids together)
- You should be able to bite off pieces of the food and choose bite-sizes that are safe for you to chew and swallow.
- You should be able to chew pieces of soft and tender food, so they are safe to swallow without tiring easily.
- You should be able to remove hard pieces from your mouth independently.

## How to test if food is suitable

- **Fork and spoon pressure:**
  - It can be cut or broken apart easily with the side of a fork or spoon.
  - The food will not regain its shape after being pressed with a fork.
- Any method can be used to eat this food (e.g. spoon, fork, fingers, and chopsticks). A knife is not required to cut this food.
- **Size:** Foods may be a range of sizes, there is no size limit or recommendation.

## Tips for safe eating and drinking

- Follow any advice you have been given by your speech and language therapist and dietitian.
- Sit upright while eating. Do not lie back or lie down whilst eating or drinking.
- Keep any distractions to a minimum while you are eating or drinking. Turn off the TV and don't talk while eating or drinking.
- Take your time, do not hurry.
- If you feel tired, stop eating. It is better to have smaller, more frequent meals throughout the day rather than one large meal.

## Warning signs

If you experience one or more of the signs below please contact your speech and language therapist:

- Choking, coughing and/or throat clearing during or soon after eating and drinking.
- Breathing problems or skin colour change when eating and drinking.
- A wet or gurgly voice after swallowing food or drinks.
- Recurrent raised temperature (i.e. signs of a fever).
- Frequent chest infections or urine infections.
- Loss of food or drink from your mouth.
- Pouching of food in your mouth.
- Weight loss.



**Always consult with your health professional for specific advice for your needs, requests and requirements for supervision.**

## Meeting your nutritional needs on an easy to chew diet

Eating a balanced diet will help to provide the nutrients that your body needs. Try to have variety of foods every day, including some from each of the food groups in the table over the page.

## Easy to chew diet suggestions



### Meat, poultry and eggs

Cook until tender, meat with bone and gristle removed.

- Lasagna
- Spaghetti Bolognese
- Tender meat stews
- Curries
- Shepherd's pie
- Stovies
- Skinless sausages
- Pâte
- Cottage pie

***If meat cannot be served soft or tender, serve as minced and moist.***



### Fish and seafood

Remove skin and bones

- Grilled, poached or fried fish
- Prawn cocktail
- Fish pie
- Tinned salmon
- Tuna

***If fish cannot be served soft or tender, serve as minced and moist.***



## Lentils and beans

All beans, lentils and legumes are to be cooked until soft/tender. They should be sieved to remove rough husks.



## Fruit and vegetables

- Steamed or boiled tender vegetables
- Jacket potatoes
- Cauliflower cheese
- Banana
- Berries
- Stewed fruit
- Pears



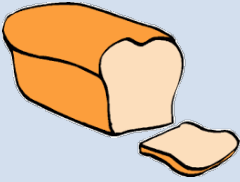
## Cheese and dairy products

- Finely grated cheese
- Wensleydale / Lancashire cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Soft cream cheese **or** soft cheese triangles
- Crème fraîche
- Plain and flavoured yoghurt
- Double cream
- Béchamel / cheese sauces
- Fortified milky drinks
- Smooth thick and creamy yoghurt or fromage frais



## Rice and cereal

- Rice or pasta served with sauce
- Risotto
- Weetabix
- Cornflakes or branflakes softened with milk and any excess liquid drained
- Porridge



## Bread

- Muffins
- Crumpets
- Soft bread rolls
- Naan
- Soft pitta bread











## Sweet desserts / savoury dips

- Plain sponge cake, cake bars or sponge fingers with custard or cream – no fruit cake
- Steamed plain pudding with custard or cream, e.g. sticky toffee pudding, vanilla sponge
- Soft fruit – tinned or fresh
- Stewed fruit with yoghurt, cream or evaporated milk
- Thick and creamy yoghurt or fromage frais
- Crème caramel
- Egg custard
- Rice pudding
- Semolina
- Trifle
- Avocado smash
- Hummus



## Foods to avoid

Type of food to avoid	Example	
Dry food	Raw vegetables, dry cereal, dry crackers, toast	
Tough or fibrous foods	Steak, crackling, pineapple,	
Hard food	Boiled sweets, whole nuts and seeds	
Chewy	Sweets, marshmallows, dried fruits	
Crunchy or crispy food	Popcorn, raw carrot, crisps	
Pips, seeds, pith	pumpkin seeds, grapes, white of oranges, fruit skins, sweetcorn, seeded bread,	
Skin, bone or gristle	Fish bones, meat with gristle	
Stringy food	Runner beans, rhubarb, celery	

## SAMPLE MENU PLAN

### **Breakfast**

Porridge, Ready Brek or instant oat cereal

Weetabix soaked well in milk

Eggs (poached, scrambled, boiled, fried)

Pancakes with syrup

*Fortify by adding cream / sugar / honey / smooth peanut butter or full-fat yoghurt and adding skimmed milk powder/cream to drinks.*

### **Mid-morning snack**

Ripe fruit cut into small pieces or gently mashed, e.g. banana, pears, peaches, plums, nectarines, melons, mangoes (all skinned), strawberries, raspberries

Pots of yoghurts, pots of soft or puréed fruit, 'Muller' rice

*Fortify by adding double cream and puréed fruit compote.*

### **Lunch**

'Moist' sandwiches, e.g. tuna, egg or grated cheese mayonnaise, cottage cheese, hummus, cheese spreads, pâtés

Thick creamy soup

Plain, soft omelette with soft filling

*Fortify by adding butter and mix into mash, or full-fat cream cheese.*

### **Mid-afternoon snack**

Soft cake, plain or flavoured sponge. Do not give cake that contains dried fruit or nuts or is topped with hard icing or marzipan

Melt in the mouth crisps, e.g. Wotsits, Quavers, Skips, Pom-Bears, Monster Munch

Chocolate, e.g. room temperature buttons, After Eight mints, chocolates with fondant centres. No chocolate that contains dried fruit & nuts, e.g. Snickers

### **Evening meal**

Well-cooked soft pasta and sauce

Boiled white rice (well cooked) with plenty of thick sauce

Steamed, poached or baked fish e.g. cod, haddock in sauce

Minced meat in thick gravy

Tender meat casserole with plenty of thick sauce or gravy

Lean tender pieces of meat e.g. chicken, turkey with plenty of thick gravy

Fish pie or Cottage pie

*Fortify by adding coconut cream/double crème, crème fraîche to curries and vegetable mash, soup, stews or gravies to enrich these.*

### **Before bed**

Have nourishing milky drinks: Malted drink made with whole milk (blue top).

*Fortify by adding double cream or skimmed milk powder to fortify.*

## Making the most of what you eat:

If you need to gain weight, have a poor or small appetite, you may need to change your diet to make sure that you are getting all the energy and protein your body needs. Enriching or fortifying your meals involves adding extra calories and protein such as cheese, cream, butter etc. See 'helpful tips' below.

***Please choose foods suited to your taste and texture as recommended by your speech and language therapist.***



## How to have a fortified diet (high calorie; high protein)

- ***Eat 'little and often'***: Try small, nourishing meals, snacks and drinks every 2-3 hours throughout the day.
- ***Fortify your milk***: add 2-4 heaped tablespoons of dried skimmed milk powder and blend into 1 pint whole milk. Chill in the fridge and then use on cereals, in porridge, to make up sauces, soups, desserts, jellies, milky drinks etc.
- ***Add dried skimmed milk powder*** to soups, cups of tea/coffee or hot chocolate, milk puddings, custards, mashed potatoes: try adding 2-3 teaspoons per portion of food.
- ***Add margarine, cheese, mayonnaise or oils*** into savoury options such as mashed swede/potato or sweet potato, pasta dishes or sandwiches.
- ***Choose full fat and full sugar products*** rather than 'diet' 'reduced/low fat' 'low sugar' or 'healthy eating' varieties as these provide more calories.
- ***Add cream or evaporated milk*** to soups or puddings e.g. stewed / canned fruits, custard, rice puddings etc. Serve jam, honey, sugar or syrup to milky puddings, cereals, drinks and desserts.

# How to add 100 calories to any meal, snack or drink

Each of the below suggestions add approximately 100 calories to a meal or snack. Aim to choose at least 4-5 of the suggestions below to achieve an additional 400-500 calories daily.

***(If you need to gain weight or have trouble eating a regular meal pattern speak to your dietitian for more specific and tailored advice.)***

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## **Sweet options:**

- 1 heaped tbsp. of sugar
- 1 small pot full fat yoghurt
- 1½ tbsp double cream
- \*2 tbsp chocolate sauce
- 2 tbsp golden syrup
- 2 tbsp lemon curd
- 2 tbsp condensed milk
- 2 tbsp honey
- 2 scoops of ice cream

## **Savoury options:**

- A small handful of finely grated cheese
- 1 tbsp of mayonnaise
- \*1 tbsp of smooth peanut butter
- 1 tbsp olive or vegetable oil
- 2 cubes of butter
- \*2 tbsp pesto
- 2 tbsp salad cream
- \*2 tbsp hummus/ tahini (sesame seed paste)
- 2 heaped tbsp dried skimmed milk powder

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*\*Not suitable if you have a peanut/seed/pine nut allergy. Always read labels to ensure products are safe to consume. Some chocolate sauces contain nuts, e.g. Nutella.*

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***In accordance with the International food and fluid descriptors labelled IDDSI May 2018 ([www.IDDSI.org](http://www.IDDSI.org))***

Department: Adult Speech & Language Therapy, January 2023  
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