

Contact details

There are two Specialist Learning Disability Teams in Hertfordshire and one in Buckinghamshire. If you have any questions or concerns about nutrition or dysphagia, please contact one of the teams below:

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Managing Dysphagia

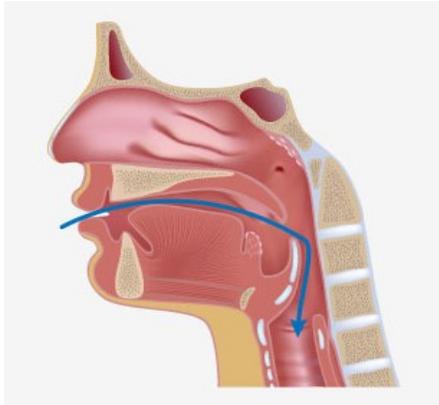


A Pureed Diet (Level 4)

Introduction

You have been given this booklet because you or a person you are caring for has swallowing difficulties or 'dysphagia'.

This booklet should always be used alongside the eating and drinking guidelines provided by a Speech and Language Therapist or dysphagia trained health care professional.



What is dysphagia?

Dysphagia is the medical term for a difficulty with swallowing. Some people with dysphagia have problems swallowing certain foods or liquids, while others cannot swallow at all.

Some examples of the problems people may experience are:

- Problems with chewing
- Difficulty controlling food and drink in the mouth
- Difficulty swallowing food and drink
- Sensation of food getting stuck
- Coughing and/or choking when eating and drinking

Frequently asked questions

Does pureeing food alter the nutritional value?

Food intended to be pureed can be overcooked and/or has water added to it when it is blended, resulting in a lower nutritional content than normal textured food. Carers must remember to not dilute food with water and ensure the person is getting adequate nutrition (e.g. use milk instead). It is recommended that a Dietitian gives advice to people on a pureed diet.

Can pureed food look and taste good?

Yes! There are a variety of ways to ensure pureed food looks, smells and tastes good. Food moulds are available, allowing you to re-shape pureed food so it looks like the original food items, and sometimes soaking solutions can be used to make items such as bread safer to eat. There are also a number of companies that produce ready-made pureed meals that are re-moulded. Your Speech & Language Therapist or Dietitian can advise you on these.



Are all foods acceptable on pureed diet?

No. Some foods are not recommended to be used as part of a pureed diet. Speak to your Speech & Language Therapist who can advise on acceptable and non-acceptable foods for people on a puree diet.

I am trying to gain weight, what should I do?

Ask your Speech and Language Therapist to refer you to the Dietitian for further advice.

I am trying to lose weight, what should I do?

Make sure you include plenty of puree vegetables and fruit. Try not to eat too many high calorie puddings. Ask your Speech and Language Therapist to refer you to the Dietitian for further advice.

Additional ideas

Soup

- All varieties of soup can be pureed.
- They may need to be strained to remove lumps.
- Add cream, cheese, potatoes, ham, minced meat or vegetables to soup before blending for extra flavour or nutrition.
- If adding vegetables with skins or husks (e.g. sweetcorn, peas, beans) you will need to blend this for longer. If 'bits' remain then this can be sieved before serving.
- Remember if the person needs thickener in their drinks then you will need to make sure the soup is as thick as their drinks. Please ask for advice from your Speech and Language Therapist.
- You can thicken soups by blending with bread (no crusts), mashed potato, or adding the same thickener that goes in their drinks.



Causes of dysphagia

Dysphagia is usually a part of another health condition, such as:

- Cerebral Palsy
- Stroke/Head injury
- Dementia
- Syndromes e.g. Down's Syndrome, Rett's Syndrome

Dysphagia may also be affected by environmental factors (e.g. a distracting dining room), posture, behaviour (e.g. eating too quickly) and medication.

Signs of dysphagia:

These are some of the common signs of dysphagia. Sometimes a person may only have one of these or may have several:

- Coughing during or after eating/drinking
- Wet or gurgly voice during or after eating/drinking
- Sensation of food getting stuck in the throat or chest
- Effortful or painful swallowing
- Lengthy mealtimes
- Discomfort/effort when swallowing
- Watering eyes when eating/drinking
- Refusing food and drink
- Distress at mealtimes
- Repeated chest infections
- Drooling
- Weight loss



Why is dysphagia important?



Sometimes people with dysphagia are at risk of food and drinks 'going down the wrong way' into their windpipe and lungs. This is called aspiration.

- Aspiration can cause chest infections, pneumonia and over time can cause irreversible damage to lung tissue. In some circumstances these can be life threatening.
- People with dysphagia are also at a greater risk of choking. This is when food blocks the airway causing the person to stop breathing.
- Dysphagia is a common problem for people with learning disabilities.
- Research has shown the people with learning disabilities are at a much greater risk of choking when compared to the general population.
- Respiratory disease has also been identified as the leading cause of death for adults with learning disabilities, and again is much more likely to happen when compared to the general population.

Puddings

Lots of puddings are suitable for a pureed diet!

- Blend milky puddings, custard or smooth yoghurt.
- Cakes: Blend to a smooth consistency with tasty sauces e.g. chocolate sauce, cream, custard or ice cream.
- Cheesecake: Remove the biscuit base and any lumps of fruit. If it is sticky, blend with some cream or milk.
- Egg custard/tart: Remove the pastry. Blend down with thin custard if the consistency is too thick/sticky.
- Rice pudding: Blend until smooth



Ice cream and sorbets: Ask your Speech and Language Therapist for advice on ways to make these foods suitable to eat.

Food and drink high in fat and/or sugar

How much fat and sugar should be in your diet depends on your specific needs:

- If you are of normal weight or over weight then try and cut down.
- If you are under weight your dietitian may advise you to increase the amount you eat.

Try to choose vegetable fats such as vegetable or olive oils and spreads instead of animal fats such as butter or lard. Nut products such as smooth peanut butter and ground nuts are good choices as these are low in saturated fat.



Milk and dairy foods

Milk and dairy food provide your body with vitamins and minerals including calcium which is important for bone health. Foods in this group also provide your body with protein.

Include two or three portions of dairy food a day. Cheese also counts as a choice from the meat fish and alternatives group.

An example of a portion is;

1 glass (250ml) of milk either as a drink or in cereal or a pudding

1 pot (125g) of yoghurt

A thumb sized (30g) piece of cheese

If you are replacing dairy with soya, rice or oat milks, choose calcium fortified options.

Cheese

- Many types of cheese can be added to pureed foods for extra flavour and nutritional.
- Soft and hard cheeses can be melted in to dishes, such as such as soups, sauces and mashed potatoes.
- Be careful that the consistency doesn't change by adding the cheese e.g. goes too thick or sticky.

Tip: Avoid stringy cheeses such as mozzarella.

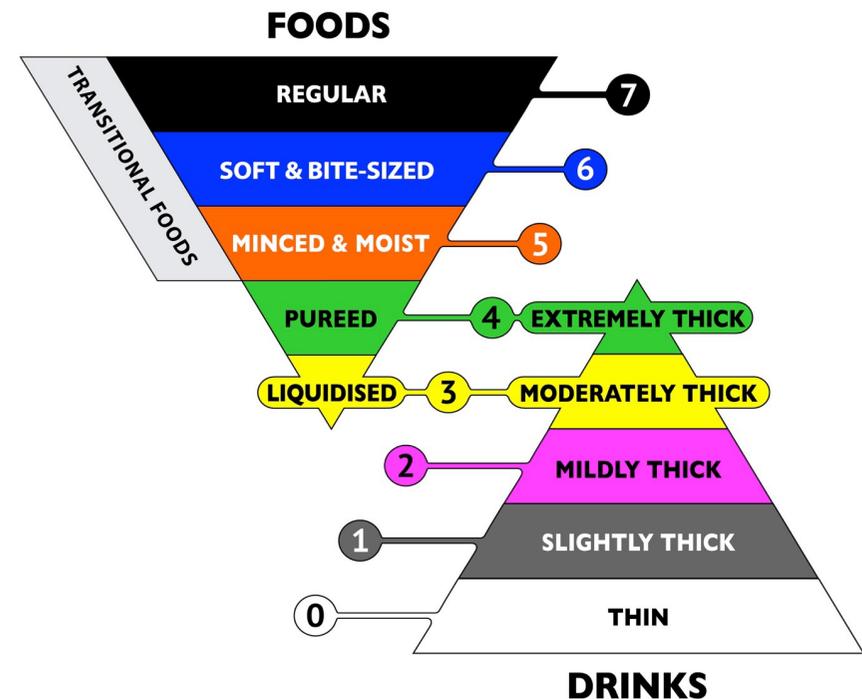


IDDSI

The International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) was introduced in 2018 to develop a global terminology to describe texture modified food and thickened liquids.

There are 8 levels, as can be seen in the diagram below, identified by numbers, text labels and colour codes.

This new framework has replaced the National Descriptors (Textures E, D, C and B) and fluid stages 1, 2 and 3 (syrup, custard and pudding) that were previously used.



What is a pureed diet?

A pureed diet can make it easier for some people with dysphagia to eat and is especially effective for people who have limited chewing.

Food is blended to a smooth consistency, without lumps. It doesn't require any chewing. Pureed food should still look, smell and taste good!

When having pureed food it is important that there is plenty of choice and that meals are balanced and healthy.

To eat a healthy balanced diet you need to choose a variety of foods from all of the five food groups every day.

How do you puree food?

The best way to produce pureed food is to use a blender.



To ensure food looks appetising it is important that **each food group is blended separately**. This also ensures maximum flavour.

For example; when preparing a roast dinner blend the meat, potato, carrots, and broccoli separately.

When blending foods you will need to add extra moisture to achieve a smooth consistency. For example: blend meat with gravy, blend potatoes with extra milk/cream etc.

Do not blend food with water as this dilutes the nutritional value.

Please ask to be referred to a dietitian if you are concerned about nutrition or notice a person starts to lose weight when eating a pureed diet.

Fruit and Vegetables

Fruit and vegetables provide your body with vitamins, minerals and fibre.

Aim to include a total of 5 portions each day.

Vegetables

Fresh, tinned or frozen vegetables can all be used.

- Peel vegetables and cut into small pieces.
- Steam or boil the vegetables until they are very soft. Drain off excess water.
- Add milk, cream or stock to help get a smooth consistency and to add extra nutrition.
- Puree in a blender.
- If using vegetables with skins or husks (e.g. sweetcorn, peas, beans) you will need to blend these for longer. If 'bits' remain then sieve it to remove the 'bits' before serving



Fruit

Fresh, tinned or frozen fruit can all be used. Avoid stringy fruits e.g. pineapple.

- Fresh fruit should be peeled and any pips, cores or stones removed before being pureed. Some fruit will need to be cooked first e.g. apples, rhubarb etc.
- Some fruits may need to be sieved before eating to remove smaller pips, e.g. raspberries and strawberries.
- Use the tinned juice or fruit juice as extra liquid if necessary.
- Mix well with custard or cream for extra nutrition and taste!
- Add puree fruit to puddings and cereals.
- Try making smoothies.



Meat, fish, eggs and beans

Include one food from this group at least twice a day with each of your meals.

Aim to include two portions of red meat a week.

Eat 2 portions of fish a week—one should be an oily fish if possible (Salmon, fresh tuna, herring, mackerel, sardines, pilchards or trout) .

These are important sources of protein, vitamins and minerals, and form part of a healthy, balanced diet.

All types of meat, poultry, soya products and fish can be pureed. Tinned meats can also be pureed.

- Remove any skin, bones, fat or gristle. Avoid fish with lots of small bones e.g. sardines.
- Cook fish as required.
- Add extra liquid such as gravy, stock, soups or sauces and blend to a smooth puree consistency.



4 PUREED

Level 4 checklist:

- ✓ *It is smooth throughout with no lumps or 'bits' - It may need to be sieved to achieve this.*
- ✓ *It does not require chewing.*
- ✓ *It is moist.*
- ✓ *Holds its shape on a plate or spoon. It can be piped, moulded or layered.*
- ✓ *It can be eaten with a spoon or a fork. It does not drop through the prongs of a fork.*
- ✓ *The prongs of a fork should leave a pattern on the surface OR food briefly retains fork indentation marks.*
- ✓ *Food slides off teaspoon with little food left on teaspoon (i.e. not sticky).*
- ✓ *There is no loose fluid that has separated off*

